000 to speak the special "languages" of their particular cults.
[184] One aspect of this initiation,[a] which has been carried over
[789] almost unchanged into some parts of Haiti (though not into
[794] Mirebalais) is the ordeal by fire, in which the novitiate must
plunge his hand into a pot of boiling cornmeal and rest his
foot on the red-hot stones which support the pot.

The role of the family deities has already been given; of the third category, that of the personal forces, one finds first of all the soul, of which each individual is conceived as having three. More important is the cult of Fa, or Destiny, which came to Dahomey from the Yoruba, and is a part of a widely spread system of discovering the destiny of a man that characterizes not only West Africa and the remainder of the continent, but most of the Old World. In Dahomey today this end is carried out by assessing the significance of the various permutations and combinations of sixteen palm kernels "thrown" by the diviner. In addition there exist traditionally earlier and less "official" methods of divining, which in the main are those which have survived in the New World.
[776] Intimately associated with both the soul and the destiny of
[171] man is the deity who is at once a member of the great pantheons and one of the most personal of all the gods, Legba, whose African importance is attested by the extent to which he is today worshipped in many parts of the New World, and by his universality in Haiti. From the point of view of Dahomean philosophy Legba may be regarded as the god of accident, who gives to man a "way out" in a world ruled by an otherwise inexorable fate. Gross in his appetites and capricious, he is, nevertheless, beloved by the Dahomeans, and though his name is usually erroneously translated by the European term "devil," no appellation could be farther from reality. Of particular significance for his role in Haitan life as guardian of the crossroads and of the *barrière* is his place in Dahomean theology, since it is said: "Before the gods can

[a] [i.e., The initiation of devotees by priests into the religious cults of Dahomey—Analyst]

eat, Legba must be fed" — in other words, Legba is interlocutor between man and gods. 000

Another figure in this category of personal deities is Dã. Briefly, it would seem that Dã is an abstraction, used to designate anything sinuous, which moves silently, undulates, and cannot be controlled. It is the principle of movement, of energy, of life itself, and, by extension, of fortune. Often spoken of as a serpent, Dã is nevertheless but the principle of mobility. If not cared for, it will weaken, be preyed upon by others of its kind, and a man's fortune will disappear. Why, then, has this Dahomean serpent cult in its Haitian form been given so important a place in the writings on Haitian religion? In the first place, the principle represented by Dã is symbolized by serpents. Again, a myth describes the rainbow serpent to be one of a pair of great snakes, the other of which lies coiled beneath the earth to support its weight, that it may not fall into the sea. But most important of all is the regard for the snake in Whydah, where it is believed to be the mythical animal ancestor of the large relationship group whose center is that coastal city. The rainbow serpent is Dã Aido Wedo, [776] sometimes known as Damballa Wedo, whose importance as a Haitian deity is mentioned in all works which treat of Haitian religion, while Dangbe, so often found in the literature on Haiti, is, however, this Whydah totem which with time has also been adopted more widely. Thus much that has been [794] written of serpent-worship in this region of West Africa — [771] the place of origin of the patterns of most of the religious cults found in Haiti today — is the result of misconception resulting from a failure to analyze this belief to its ultimate significance.

It remains but to speak of magic. Magic in West Africa is not an isolated phenomenon, but is closely integrated with the other aspects of religion. In Dahomey magic charms are sold by professional workers of magic, but the derivation of the

175 567 669 and another in 1691. The object of this latter rebellion was to massacre all the whites in the district, but it was discovered before the uprising could be effective, and its leaders were executed. Still another incipient revolt in the region of Cap Français was put down in 1704.[26]

In the main, however, there were too few opportunities for united action on the part of the slaves from any considerable area to permit the idea of a general revolt to germinate and grow into action; such rebellions as occurred in the years that followed were local affairs, and were principally the result of specific abuses. [994] Yet the fear of them was always with the planters, and of this fear the *vodun* cult, characterized by St. Mery as being potentially "a terrible weapon" in the hands of the leaders of the cult, was the symbol and crystallizing agent.[27] That there was no lack of realization of the danger to the colonists from slave uprisings is made clear in letters of the period written to France; as early as 1685 M. de Cussy, reporting to the Minister of Colonies in Paris, stated: "In the Negroes we possess a formidable domestic enemy," while a hundred years later an officer of the armies of the King who was also a plantation-owner in Haiti expressed the opinion that "a colony of slaves is a city under constant threat of assault; there one walks on barrels of powder." [28]

175 567 More frequently, however, the expression of protest took the form of *marronage,* of running away to the hills, a phenomenon not restricted to Haiti, since in other regions of the New World, notably Jamaica and Dutch Guiana, the runaways maintained themselves so successfully that they were accorded their independence by formal recognition, as was also done in Haiti in 1784.[29] Figures on the extent to which slaves made off into the mountains tell the measure of their desperation; in 1720 alone, a thousand Negroes gained their freedom in this manner; in 1751, at least 3,500. Some of the leaders of these bands were men of great ability, and the depredations they engaged in caused serious losses to the planters

are no customary playmate or joking relationships between 603 593 604 grandparents and grandchildren, a man would rather go to his grandparents when in trouble than to his parents or uncles, because of the greater indulgence they show him.

At about the age of seven or eight the children's play-life is 868 860 invaded by the serious work which they must increasingly assume. According to their sex, they are instructed by father or mother, each parent teaching the child the work he will be most occupied with as he matures. For some children, naturally, this education is deferred longer than for others, but, as a rule, boys of four or five may be seen playing about the field "helping" father by bringing him a leaf with which to light his cigarette, or "hoeing" in company with him, while girls are early permitted the pleasure of accompanying their mothers to market. By observing his father at work and by helping in small tasks the boy gradually learns how to do a man's work, until at about the age of fifteen he himself can cultivate a garden. Two or three years later he is given a field of his own and seed with which to sow it. The produce from it he brings to his [454] mother to sell for him, and she keeps what money it brings, so that he will have his savings when he wishes to marry. Little girls, for whom acquaintance with the techniques of selling in the market is desirable, are given small articles to dispose of, and the proceeds belong to them, though some mothers demand an accounting from the young tradeswomen as a further measure of training. A woman also teaches her daughter to sew, to cook, and to wash and iron, instruction which is continued until a girl, ready to be given in marriage, is able to manage all of a woman's work.

If a family can afford the expense, children begin to be pre- 852 869 pared for their first communion at eight or ten years of age; but members of poor families must wait until the money can be found — which means that some classes of candidates include grown men and women. At about the customary age for 869 794 confirmation the children are informed of the family vodun

869 [794] deities, and they are taught what must be done when a sacrifice is to be given. Parents differ widely in this as in other practices, and while some make it a point to impart this information both at this time and later in the life of the child, others refuse to answer questions, and the child must learn from what he himself observes.

864 Children in the valley of Mirebalais receive little formal sex
education. Shortly before marriage young women are told
enough of the mechanism of the sexual life to guard against
their being frightened when their husbands come to them. As
early as seven years of age, however, girls are cautioned not to
permit boys to play with them sexually, while a girl who
reaches puberty is carefully watched, not being permitted to
go for water or firewood or on other errands unless accompanied by some child, usually younger than herself. No explanation for this is given; she is simply forbidden to leave the
house alone, though eventually she learns the reasons from
864 other girls. Neither special ritual nor special instruction fol-
881 lows first menstruation; the girl merely apprises her mother of
the fact. She herself has learned of the phenomenon by observing her mother and her older friends and consequently is not
troubled by her initial menstrual flow, but rather is pleased
that she has now become a woman.

864 This absence of formal sex education does not stand seriously in the way of the young in learning the technique of sexual intercourse. Boys of six and seven surreptitiously "experiment" with girls of their own age in the sex act, despite parental warnings. This ceases, however, as soon as the girls are nubile, for then they are under strict supervision. Young boys are often given information concerning the technique of sexual intercourse by their older brothers or friends, when these gather in groups and discuss among themselves their amorous adventures. Another manner in which the child obtains sex education is by observing the behavior of his parents. Children usually share their parents' bed until they are six or

of the dead must be deferred for a later chapter. Similarly, the 776
discussion of the final element in Haitian religion, the belief in magic, must also be reserved for later pages, stressing here only its separate identity from the worship of the *loa*, with which it has been too often confused.[10]

The most striking element in the *vodun* cult is the manner 787
in which the gods possess their devotees. Despite the fact that 794
this is the aspect of Haitian religion that seems to the casual observer its least restrained and least disciplined, possession occurs according to well-defined rules and under specifically defined circumstances. And since it is through an analysis of possession that the clearest understanding can be reached of the meaning of the *loa* to those who worship them, the manner in which they influence the lives of their devotees and exert their powers for good or evil, possession may be treated at some length.[11]

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When a person is possessed for the first time, the spirit 787
which is said to animate him is known as a *loa bossal*, an "un- 776
tamed" god. The word *bossal*, which in the early days was ap- [192]
plied to newly arrived Africans,[12] has always been a term of contumely, and today the same feeling-tone is continued through the belief that since all things in the universe are subject to observable regulation, and animals and plants and human beings must all live according to these rules, the *loa*, as members of society, may not manifest the unrestrained and often dangerous traits of unpredictable behavior which characterize them before they have been "baptized" and thus brought under proper control.

Baptism of a deity most often occurs when a boy or girl is possessed by a family *loa*, especially if it is one which gives that knowledge of healing and divination meant by the word *connaissance*. Sometimes, though not always, this possession is violent, and the prospective devotee rages about the house, destroying whatever comes to hand. On occasion, since custom frowns on possession at a ceremony not given by the family of

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787 the one possessed, possessions of this kind mean either that the 776 *loa* needs baptism; or that, being baptized, its devotee has been negligent in serving the god.

796 No actual rite of baptism of a *loa* — or, as it is also termed, 776 of *lavé tête,* "washing the head" — was witnessed, but the 794 account of the ceremony given here, obtained independently from several persons, represents an adequate exposition of the rite as performed in Mirebalais. A room is prepared where the person whose *loa* is to be baptized must remain for three days. The mat or bed on which the neophyte rests is covered with fresh sheets and pillow-cases, and three changes of clothing are made ready, one of which must be entirely new for the last day of the ceremony. These are in the color of the god [822] being "baptized"; that is, if the *loa* were revealed to be such a one as Damballa, Aida Wedo, or Gran' Erzilie, everything would be white, but if it were Gran' Siligbo, the colors would be blue and white; if Ogun, everything would be red; if Ossange, blue; where the god is one of the Pétro suite, such as 'Ti Kita or Bosu, everything would be black.*

During the three days' "retreat" the one whose *loa* is being consecrated lies alone. All day long the men and women of the family sit in the next room or outside the house, singing and praying, though at night they sleep, since "this is not a wake." [533] They not only sing the songs sacred to the *loa* being baptized, but also the canticles of the Virgin, while prayers of the Church are recited under the leadership of the *prêt' savanne,* the "bush-priest" whose ability to read the prayers makes him an essential figure in all *vodun* rites. They may from time to time have "a little procession" about the room where the novitiate lies, when small banners in the color of the god are [782] carried. Soft drinks and a *mangé sec* — a "dry" offering — are given the god, and white tapers and an oil lamp are

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* A detailed listing of the names, attributes, and powers of the more widely worshipped *loa*, the colors, days, and trees or other places sacred to them, and the "squads" into which they are conceived to be formed, will be found in an appendix at the end of this book.

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lighted. Chicken and rice may also be cooked for any god ex- 776
cept Gede, while chocolate and rice with milk are favored, 778
since it is said " the *loa* love desserts " — a commentary on the [782]
very immediate and human character of these spirits.

The actual baptism, or "washing of the head," is per- [793]
formed on the third day of the ceremony by a *vodun* priest [596]
or priestess who is a member of the family, though any mem-
ber who has important *loa* and the necessary *connaissance* may
officiate if the membership of the family includes no priest.
As at any baptism, there must be a godfather and godmother, [608]
and preference is given those who are the parents of twins or
are themselves twins. The officiant must be possessed at the [787]
time, since, it is said, " one *loa* baptizes another." Leaves of [824]
the basilique tree are steeped in perfumed cold water, and the
hands of the one who baptizes are first immersed in the liquid; [533]
then, while songs of the *loa* and canticles of the Virgin are
sung, he washes the head of the person to be baptized. Posses- [787]
sion occurs immediately, and the new devotee lies back, half
conscious, while all others kneel, seeking word from the *loa*
to learn if it is satisfied. If an affirmative answer is given, all
retire, the person possessed remaining in the room to sleep
through the night. A " ball," but not a *vodun* dance, may [527]
celebrate the event either the next day or later, but this is not
obligatory, and most often those present, after eating, quietly
disperse. The following day the one who has been baptized
goes to the family place of worship and greets those who have
helped him. Only one further rite is necessary, and this solely
when the *loa bossal* is revealed to be a hostile god. Then the
loa, after having been baptized, is " restrained " by being
placed in a jar and buried, so it cannot later emerge and
trouble the family of the one to whom it has come.[18]

The ceremony of baptism, in Mirebalais, is in no sense a
first step into any *vodun* hierarchy, for, as will be seen, no
such hierarchy exists in this valley. One important priest [793]
there derives his power from *loa* that have never been bap-

795 794 tized at all, but merely respond to an innate ability to control
776 them. To have a baptized *loa,* then, merely means that the
795 worship of the *loa* is thereafter carried on in regular form.
The worshipper learns how to *marré*, or "tie,"[14] his spirit,
so as to enjoy the social aspects of a *vodun* dance without fear
[782] that his *loa* will come unbidden. He gives it small offerings
from time to time, and if it becomes insistent, or if his family
is being troubled by its gods, he takes full part in the rituals
that are staged.[15]

787 In native idiom, a person when possessed is "mounted"
776 by his god, and thereafter becomes his *ch'wal,* or "horse." A
794 devotee may come under the influence of a number of spirits
during a single ceremony or dance, one *loa* succeeding another.
The first deity that ever came to a person, however, for
him constitutes the chief of his gods — his *mait' tête* — and
the leader of any deities which may subsequently possess him.
[764] It is this *loa* alone that is "baptized," and this one alone
"taken from his head" at his death; and, as far as he is concerned,
all his other gods are under the control of this *mait'
tête,* so that any agreement which he may enter into with this
principal spirit must be respected by all the others.

Fundamentally, to be possessed by a *loa* means that an individual's spirit is literally dispossessed by that of the god. Personalities undergo radical change in accordance with the nature of the deity,[16] while even the sex of the one possessed is disregarded if it differs from that of the god, so that, for example, a woman "mounted" by Ogun is always addressed as Papa Ogun.[17] One wears the colors of the god and the ornaments he likes, eating and drinking those things he prefers, and otherwise manifesting his peculiar characteristics — rolling on the earth, if possessed by Damballa or chattering incessantly if by Gede.[18]

787 Not everyone, by any means, is subject to states of posses-
781 sion. If the existence of individual differences in the capacity
794 for religious expression be recognized, it becomes apparent

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that while some react to the supernatural with immediate and overwhelming emotion, and others, though incapable of as deep a response, do sense the mysteries of possession, there are still others who go through life without ever feeling this religious "thrill." In native explanation, it is the former to whom the gods manifest themselves, who become the *ch'wal* of their *loa*; while to the latter the deities never make themselves known. Scientifically, the phenomenon of possession in Negro cultures, at least, is as yet unsatisfactorily explained, largely because of the almost complete absence of adequate reports on the background and incidence of specific cases. Perhaps the most satisfactory approach to its understanding is through a consideration of it in terms of differences in nervous instability, which may be thought of as predisposing different persons to experience the religious thrill in different degrees; or, in other terms, by reference to their differing susceptibility to suggestion. One must reject an hypothesis which (114) attempts to explain the *vodun* cult of Haiti in terms of the neuroses, even when, as in the admirable exposition of Dr. Dorsainvil, the approach neglects neither accepted genetic theory in stressing the inheritance of neurotic tendencies in voduist family lines, nor the important historical forces which have been operative.[19] For in terms of the patterns of Haitian religion, possession is not abnormal, but normal; it is set in its cultural mold as are all other phases of conventional living. That it gives release from psychic tension does not alter the case; neither does the fact that it offers a way to the satisfaction of unfulfilled desires, as when the god, speaking through a woman under possession, demands a necklace or bracelet which, though forever the property of the god, will be worn by his devotee. These facts merely emphasize the compensatory character of the phenomenon. The social situation of the individual also enters; some undoubtedly simulate possession for the attention it brings them, while a person who experiences no serious difficulties in the course of his life is perhaps never

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787 called upon to ask whether or not he is properly serving his
781 gods; is never placed in a situation for which possession would
[114] be a release. Hence to consider all possession as something
which falls within the range of psychopathology is to approach
it handicapped by a fundamental misconception.

787 The best evidence of the socially normal nature of posses-
794 sion is the existence of rules governing its incidence which are well understood by all. Not everyone who is a *ch'wal* may become possessed at any dance or *service*, for the gods, if properly under control, are permitted to come only to members of the family giving the rite. At one *vodun* dance given by a priest where a number of other *hungans*, present as guests, became possessed, the host was regarded as having taken undue advantage of his visitors by bringing on their possessions. In another case Haitians from the southern peninsula who were temporarily residing in Mirebalais carefully refrained from contact with a certain *vodun* priest lest he bring on possession by their gods. At one dance for the Rada gods, the *loa* Taureau, a Pétro deity, possessed one of the drummers. Because a Pétro *loa* was neither expected nor wanted, the man was immediately removed and, when quieted, sent home. A similar situation developed at another Rada dance where Bosu "came"; the person possessed was at once taken outside the enclosure until his god had left him. If a *loa* persists in dancing at a *vodun* dance given by another family, it is either one of these *loa bossal* already described, or a *loa vagabond,* and may be scolded by the *hungan:* "You must not come here! You are not wanted! Go home where you belong!" The passion with
[781] which a person resists his god when he feels possession coming on at a rite not given by his own family is particularly instructive. Men have been seen holding so tightly to the rafters of the shelter under which the dance was being held that the muscles of their forearms formed great cords, while beads of
[782] perspiration rolled down their foreheads.[20] A person who must live away from his family for a long time usually takes

steps to " feed " his *loa* in order to satisfy it, for it is more im- 787
portant to give offerings to the spirits than to dance for them. 782
He therefore either quietly prepares a sacrifice of cereals and 794
liquor in his own room or sends money home so that his *loa* may be " fed " at the family habitation, and his absence explained to it.[31] 794

When *vodun* deities are discussed in Mirebalais, most often 776
two " companies " of them are mentioned, the Rada and the 178
Pétro " squads." In one list of gods that was obtained, the [192]
word *Rada,* derived from the name of the ancient principality [103]
of Allada in Dahomey, called forth the explanation " *qui veut dire Dahomey* — which is to say, Dahomey," though it should be made clear that neither the words *Rada* nor *Dahomey* are any longer recognized in Haiti as place-names, being today
simply qualifying designations of *loa*. There are regional dif- [184]
ferences in the number and ranking of other categories of gods that hold no important place in Mirebalais. The existence of these other categories is, of course, well known, and one person referred to " the seventeen and twenty-one classes of *loa,*" of which, however, only the following were named: Rada, Pétro, Dahomey, Guinée, Congo, Nago, Ibo, and Wangol. Of these the Congo and the Ibo gods are well known, though their worship is chiefly restricted to individual families, while the Nago and Dahomey categories, though significant from the point of view of indicating African origins, are most commonly grouped under the term *Rada.* Guinée also occasionally figures in worship as carried on in individual families, but this term is more often understood as a general designation for all *loa* outside the Rada, Nago, Congo, and Ibo groupings and for certain Pétro gods. Wangol derives from the geographical entity Angola.

From comparatively early times the impression has been 776
given that certain of these classes of gods perform only good, 794
and others evil. Nothing could be further from the truth than this attempt to read European concept into Haitian ideology,

776 794 for though some gods are feared far more than others, and some generally regarded with affection, even these latter bring great harm to a neglectful devotee, while the gods whose power validates the most malignant magic may, in certain situations, work for the good of their worshippers. Especially has there been great confusion in discussions of the so-called [114] Dom Pédro worship. Whether or not the origin of the term as given by St. Mery is correct — that it derives from the name of its founder, a Spanish Negro from Petit-Goâve[22] — the statements that have been made concerning it are in the main [782] misleading.[23] Thus, it is not true that the Pétro gods are unqualifiedly evil and the Rada deities unqualifiedly good; nor that blood sacrifices are made exclusively at Pétro ceremonies, while the services for other gods are innocent of such sacrificial 776 794 769 offerings. The impression gathered in Mirebalais concerning the Pétro gods is that they are principally, though not exclusively, derived from the process of deification of powerful ancestors, which in Africa exists in forms that clearly explain the essential tradition that offers a basis for this custom as found in Haiti. This is reinforced by statements to the effect that most of the Pétro "squad" are Créole or native gods as 793 794 776 769 against the Guinée deities in the other groupings. One member of the *vodun* cult, indeed, made the concept of deifying the powerful dead explicit, saying that Pétro was a great and evil *vodun* priest who had died with the *loa* not "taken from [775] his head." For while a general principle in the cult of the dead is that in the normal course of events those who die deliver up their souls to God, making the care for these souls primarily a concern of the Church, it is recognized that there are others such as this Dom Pedro who become *loa*. This oc- [764] curs when an individual, usually a priest or priestess of the *vodun* cult, who during his lifetime was known to possess great supernatural power, dies without having had his *loa* [775] "withdrawn from his head." Burdened by these spirits, and therefore unable to get to God, his soul goes to the bottom of

a stream, there to remain until, becoming impatient, it demands 793
to be taken out. A ceremony then brings back the tortured 794
soul and makes of it a "*loa nan canarie* — a *loa* in a 778
jar" — which thereafter acts as a guard for its family. 768 775

There is little agreement as to the place of residence of the 794
loa. In general, it is believed that they come from Guinée each 776
time they are called, returning when they have, in the native 787
idiom, "descended from the heads of their horses" — that is,
when the possession of their devotees has ceased. Those "under
the water," however, being Haitians, remain in Haiti for
seven years until the ceremony just mentioned, of putting
them *nan canarie,* has been performed, when they, like the
other *loa,* return to Guinée. At the same time, all recognize
the African character of the *loa,* whether they be gods brought
from Africa or the Créole *loa* from Haiti itself.

Worship of the *loa* is directed by priests of the cult. The 793
terms *papaloi* and *mamaloi* as designations for male and female 776
priests, almost universally employed by non-Haitian 184
writers, are practically unknown in Mirebalais, where, as in
most regions of Haiti, a priest is called a *hungan,* a priestess
a *mambu.*[34] Besides the *hungan* (or *mambu*), and the *gangan;* 791
a term applied to a *hungan* of renown, is the *bocor,* a practitioner
of magic, not a member of any *vodun* priesthood, but
a man who has acquired his power by the purchase of spirits.
He is particularly differentiated from the *hungan* and *mambu* 755
by the fact that the *loa* of their own accord are believed to 793
have given "*connaissance*" — the knowledge of healing and 776
helping, to these latter.[35] Not all gods can endow their devotees (791)
with this *connaissance.* Some of the Rada deities, in addition
to those of the Ogun group who give it, are Legba, Damballa,
Aizan, Bosu, St. Jean, and Agwe Woyo; among the Pétro gods
it is conferred by Bosu Trois Cornes, Simbi d'leau, Gede, Osange,
Mait' Gran' Bois, and Mait' Calfou (Carrefour). Simbi
en Deux Eaux and Simbi Proméné both give magic power, the
former conferring knowledge of excellent protectives against

are differentiated according to the types of healing in which 793
they have had the greatest success, and the "miracles" to their 755
credit, such as a *hungan* who had achieved a wide reputation 789
for being able to resuscitate dead children. One *hungan* of the (843)
valley is spoken of as having powers which rank him with the greatest in the land, but now that he is old, a nephew of his is being called upon to act in his place. In a relatively short time, say his friendly clients, he will take his place even among great *hungans* elsewhere.

Under the *hungan* and *mambu* are assistants called *hunsi,* 794 ●
or sometimes, in the case of men, termed *adjanikon.* In some 184
parts of Haiti, particularly in the plain of the Cul-de-Sac and 789
the southern peninsula, there are degrees of initiation for the *hunsi,* which include the ordeal by fire that makes them *hunsi kanzo.*[28] In Mirebalais, however, the *kanzo* rite, though known by name, is neither required nor performed. The *hunsi* and *adjanikon* know the rituals in a general way, hold and wave the banners used to salute the gods, sing the songs for the *loa,* aid in bringing the possessed dancers out of their possessions, and perform such other ritual tasks as helping the officiating *hungan.* Some members of the cult group have special ability to sing large numbers of the ritual songs for any *loa* which may be called, while others perform the animal sacrifices. It is among these male assistants that the most expert drummers are found.

This, then, constitutes an outline of that system of belief 771
included under the term *vodun.* Once more, in summary, it may be emphasized that *vodun* is neither the practice of black magic, nor the unorganized pathological hysteria it is so often represented to be. The gods are known to their worshippers, and the duties owed them are equally well understood. The reward for the performance of these duties is good health, good harvests, and the goodwill of fellow-men; the punishment for neglect is corresponding ill fortune. On this basis of belief is erected the ceremonial of worship.

CHAPTER IX

VODUN WORSHIP: THE SERVICE

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THE *loa* make known their desires by means of possessing their devotees and speaking through them, or by divination, and if these desires are not gratified, they will mildly harass the family of their devotees, until, thoroughly angered, they will seek full vengeance for this neglect.[1] Fortunately, the wants of many of the gods are modest, and they are satisfied if a candle is occasionally lighted, some water " thrown away " in the place of worship, and they are kept informed of family happenings. But when the *loa* finally clamor for a sacrifice, the time when it is to be made is deferred until the necessary preparations can be completed, for the attitude of the Haitians toward the gods in such matters, as one explained it, is that " *Mystère c'est 'ti moun, faut les derigé* — The *loa* are like children, and must be told what to do," and " If the *loa* are promised a sacrifice, they must accept the date set by the one who serves them." But when that date arrives, the ceremony must be held or the *loa* will cause their worshippers much trouble. This does not mean that a poor person, or one who has met with reverses, may not plead with his god and count on being permitted to defer the offering if he is unable to provide what is asked.

Simple annual rites are held for the gods in January, each 78
family giving small offerings in its house of worship to its own 776
deities. These minor ceremonies are not to be confused with
the extended rituals which a family may perform but once in
a decade or a generation. Because of the extensive preparation
and large outlay these entail, such rites are often postponed
from year to year. According to some, this postponement is
sought through an *action de grâce,* based on Church ritual,
while others maintain that it is but necessary on his special
day to appeal to the deity who is troubling the family, give
a small offering — a *mangé sec* — and ask for the desired respite.
This may be done several times, until crop failures, sud- [793]
den deaths, and the loss of valuable property begin to afflict the [787]
family, whereupon the family head seeks out a *hungan,* who
by divination determines the supernatural forces that are responsible
for these misfortunes; and when his statement that
the gods have reached the end of their patience is confirmed
independently by several other priests who are consulted, active
preparations for the major rite are finally set in motion.

Any such important ceremony must be held on the ancestral 346
habitation, and centers in the *maison de servitude,* the family 778
house of service for the gods. The house itself, to be differen- 794
tiated from the *humfort,* or "temple" of the *vodun* priest, 78
may be elaborate or simple in accordance with the status of
family members in the *vodun* cult.[3] At one end of the sacred
house is a platform about two and one half feet high on which [776]
are placed calabash plates for the *loa,* six for the Créole
deities, three for the Mystères Guinée, and a white plate with
a "thunder stone," or Neolithic celt, and a necklace for Damballa.
Not all *cailles mystères* are painted, but some, it is said, [353]
are green "for hope," and some red "for victory," while one [532]
was said to have designs of flowers and snakes painted on the
wall above the platform.[4] These houses usually have two rectangular
rooms, each with a separate entrance and each having
its platform at the narrow end facing the doorway. One of [776]

346 the rooms is consecrated to the *loa*, the other to the spirits of
778 twins and the family dead. If the house is a large one with
776 three rooms, the third will be for the Congo *loa*. It was also
● 774 said that occasionally such places of worship reserve one room
[illegible] for the Rada deities, a second for the Pétro *loa*, and the third for the Congo gods, the dead and twins being worshipped elsewhere. For the Ibo gods, however, it is agreed in Mirebalais that there is never a separate room. But whether the gods are worshipped in a single-room thatched shelter or a more impressive "temple" with a metal roof, none of the major categories of supernatural powers are neglected.

776 In the main, large ceremonies are concerned with the task
78 of restraining, or less often of pacifying, deities that have been
796 molesting a family, and of making content those who have
784 been demonstrating their goodwill toward the group. Such rites must be sharply differentiated from the ordinary *vodun* dance which, coming after the family ritual, forms but a part of this complex, and serves to express joy at the dangers averted and gratitude for the good that the friendly *loa* are to bring. At the ceremony drums may or may not be employed; at *vodun* dances they are indispensable. Possession is induced at the ceremony by the *hungan's* invocations; at the dance by the rhythm of the drums. The ceremony is attended only by members of the family and those who are specially invited; invitations to the *vodun* dance are broadcast over the countryside, and all take part in the social phases of the evening. For the ceremony, sacrifices not alone of cereals and drinks but also of the blood of animals are provided; at the *vodun* dance only minor offerings are given. And while both types of ritual are a part of a single functioning religious system, it is at the first where the most important end is achieved, that of obtaining protection from hostile gods and gaining the favor of those who are friendly.

78 The pattern of the ceremony — called a *service loa* — is
79 sufficiently definite to allow a generalized version to be given,

78 *loa* troubling the family, or, if it is the second, those which 79 have helped them, to tell whether or not they are willing to re- 776 ceive the sacrificial animals. The omen which indicates their acceptability to the gods is their nibbling at leaves or pecking at grains of corn and other cereals offered them, after which the gods themselves come, possessing their servitors. At midnight or later, as the violence of the possession recedes, the sac- [184] rifices are offered. In Mirebalais, at least, the hysteria said to mark the moment "when the blood flows" is not present. The actual killing of the animals, witnessed in numerous instances, is one of the more routine aspects of the ritual.[7]

After the animals have been killed, a long period of quiet ensues while the work of dressing and cooking them takes place, the ceremony beginning anew when this is done. If evil deities are to be banished or "restrained," they are called once more, and the priest may have to battle with those possessed by them, for these gods have no desire to be driven away, or incarcerated where they cannot escape. Most of the food given such gods is placed in large pots and buried in the earth with them, but, with characteristic human perversity, if the sacrifices have been for good *loa,* these are only allowed to have small portions. The ceremony closes with the coming of day.[8]

778 This pattern varies in details, and to the Haitian these dif- 792 ferences are important. This is shown by the response of a per- 794 son in whose company two similar rites were observed, to the 776 question whether the second would resemble the first. The an- 184 swer was decisive. "No, the ceremony will not be the same. In the first one the most important spirit lived in a mango tree; in the second, it is in a bamboo." The Pétro gods receive black or gray-colored animal offerings, the Rada deities white, red, 778 and vari-colored ones. Only Bosu Trois Cornes, Pelicon, and 776 Pelib are given bullocks, the first because he, like this animal, 794 is horned; the second because he is even more dangerous than 776 Bosu; and Pelib because as a water-god he will otherwise take

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cattle and all other animals when the river floods. Rituals in- 776
volving these larger sacrifices, however, are held only on the 774
rarest of occasions, and are thus much less common than 776
the ceremony which, typical of those witnessed, may now be described.

This *service* was held in a habitation southwest of Mire- 78
balais, across the Tombe River in the foothills of the moun- 79
tains. It was said to be the first ceremony of its kind given by 753
this family, and would not have to be repeated for a genera- 776
tion or more. The immediate cause was the occurrence of numerous illnesses and deaths. When members independently consulted their *hungans* to discover the reason for these misfortunes, they were informed that the family *loa* demanded such a rite. Finally one priest, more powerful than the others, became possessed and described in great detail the type of ceremony that was desired: of how many days' duration, the number and kind of sacrifices, what gods were to be called, which troublesome ones must be " sent away " or " restrained," and those of the friendly *loa* who were to be fed.

The entire ritual was conducted out of doors, and at about 78
half past four in the afternoon of Thursday, 5 July, 1934, when 79
first seen, the *action de grâce* had already begun. It was being 776
chanted by the *prêt' savanne*, a bespectacled, middle-aged 778
man, who read from an old prayerbook, while the *hungan* sat quietly by. The officiant was standing in a cleared space with his back toward a grove of trees, facing the " altar." Opposite was a grassy slope, which was separated from this grove by a brook where the Malt' Source lives who watches over the habitation of the family. A white banner hung high in one of the trees a little behind the altar.

This altar, called the *trône*, was a table covered with a white cloth, spread over a frame to form a canopy sheltering its sides and back. A black cloth was beneath the white covering. Under the table a wooden bowl — a *gamelle* — contained water in which sacred leaves had been steeped; near it was a

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ABOVE, *The possessed woman offering a candle and pouring sanctified water before the altar.*

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BELOW, *The* vodun *priest exhorting the possessed woman.*

[facing p. 161]

employed — do not remain with the drummers. These instru- 796
ments are ordinarily in the hands of *hunsi*, who join the 534
massed ring of dancers that constantly circles about the center [794]
pole. These dancers are not under possession, but are merely
enjoying the evening or participating in the social aspect of
the dance preparatory to becoming possessed. The rattle is 796
held high above the heads of the dancers, and its sharp, steady 533
notes are produced by quick, short, measured movements of
the wrist. The end of a song, which sometimes does not come
until fifteen or twenty minutes after its initial statement, is
usually marked by a continuous shaking of a rattle, a process
which effectually breaks the rhythm and makes it possible to
begin a new song. The player of the rattle is an outstanding
singer, who usually initiates the fresh refrain and continues
to sing its repetitions as soloist in the alternation of solo and
chorus which marks Haitian *vodun* singing as it marks most
West African and New World Negro religious music.

When a possession occurs, the songs for the deity who has 796
"arrived" are taken up as the drums play the rhythm of 789
the god. As his possession comes on, the devotee falls to the
ground, rolling before the drums, or staggers blindly about
the dancing-space, or otherwise follows the characteristic be-
havior attributed to his god. After a time he begins to dance, [793]
whereupon a *hunsi* or the *hungan*, taking a calabash of water [794]
in one hand and a lighted candle in the other, dances opposite
him, saluting the god as he performs his every movement in re-
verse; if he turns clockwise, the one dancing with him turns
counter-clockwise; if he moves to the right, the other moves to
the left. Except when executing these turns, the functionary
of the cult never takes his eyes from the eyes of the possessed
person, almost, as it were, hypnotizing him to help him come
to himself. Eventually the possessed one recovers sufficiently
to take the candle and the calabash of water in his own hands.
Often spilling water as he moves, he makes his way to the cen- [782]
tral pole, pouring an offering and making the sign of the cross [788]
with the candle before it.

796 787 with the candle before it. He next does the same before the *ogan,* then before each of the drums in order, continuing to dance before the drums, usually with great violence, while the few "social" dancers who still may be circling about the center pole make way so that he may execute his steps. Gradually his dancing becomes calmed, until he is taken either to the *maison de servitude* or to a near-by house, where he rests and if, as often happens, he has rolled on muddy ground during his possession, washes and changes his clothes.

796 794 789 159 Several examples of the force of this tradition of being "mounted" by the *loa* may be given. One of these which is of especial interest concerns the possession of a man of good education, in the early thirties, who throughout his childhood and early manhood had had no association with the *vodun* cult, but had been encouraged by his family and his own ambition to promote the activities of the Catholic Church. In discussing his earlier experiences and background with one of his intimates, it seemed that on the side of both father and mother many of his relatives were affiliated with the cult, and it was recounted how, at an important ceremony at his ancestral habitation, some years before, he had become possessed. But it was also made clear that he had not been any the less active in the affairs of the Church because of this transient experience, nor had he affiliated himself in any way with any *vodun* group. Why he wished once more to participate in the *vodun* rituals cannot be said; certainly during the weeks immediately preceding his possession he had become interested in the philosophy of *vodun,* and his non-voduistic, if not anti-voduistic background seemed to accentuate his interest in ascertaining the hold of these rites, which had always been presented to him as repellent, on their followers. As an example of the duality of his interest, it may be stated that though he had remarked how "disgusting" it was to roll in the mud when possessed by Damballa, he had also been im-

pressed with the temerity of those who danced in the fire for 796
Legba. 794

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At a certain dance, however, he volunteered to help in a 159
small way in promoting the activities of the evening, such as serving *clairin* to the drummers, while he himself danced the social dance about the central post of the *tonnelle*. As the tempo of the dance heightened, he became more deeply imbued with the spirit of the occasion and shouted: " If the *loa* comes to me, I will accept it! " as he plunged again into the circle of dancers. When the drums sounded the salute to the gods, he would awkwardly execute the accompanying backward turning movement of the figure.

After a time he left the *tonnelle*, but before many moments had elapsed a commotion was heard at the near-by *barrière*, where he was reeling in the first stage of possession, just inside the gate, while a fully possessed woman in a figured dress stalked back and forth. An *adjanikon*, with candle and calabash of water, was trying to " settle " his possession, but he fell to the ground and rolled on his back, lying prostrate with legs and arms outstretched and twitching. The *adjanikon*,
putting aside the candle and water, lifted his limp body to its [533]
feet and then slowly, according to the accepted pattern, hold- [539]
ing him upright, swayed with him in time to the song that all twelve or fifteen persons present were by now singing, until, staggering, the possessed man was able to support himself:

Damballa-o, Damballa-e,	Damballa-o, Damballa-e,
Damballa-o, Damballa Wedo,	Damballa-o, Damballa Wedo,
'Gadé ça ou fait' moin.	See what you have done to me.

Steadily fixing his eyes on the possessed one, the *adjanikon* now danced with him, turning always in the opposite direction as he offered him the candle and the water, which, how-

796 794 789 159 ever, the man was not yet able to hold. Moving backwards toward the *maison de servitude,* all the spectators continued to sing the song of Damballa, while the man to whom the god had come half-danced and was half-carried up the path to the *tonnelle* and taken into the family house of worship.

788 When he had sufficiently recovered to be able to hold the candle and the water, he poured the water and unsteadily bowed three times in the accepted manner before the *couvert sec* to the Rada gods. He now was enough in control of himself to emerge, and, with the *adjanikon* dancing before him with water and a candle, he once again came into the *tonnelle,* before the drums. As he appeared, the drummers stopped the Ogun rhythm they had been sounding, and in an intense silence all waited for the god to announce himself. Half on his 538 539 knees before the drums, the one possessed began to sing in a cracked voice:

Damballa Wedo,	Damballa Wedo,
Papa m' c'est coulev'-o,	Papa, I am a serpent-o,
Na poi' bois	There is no tree
Moin pa' li monté.	I cannot climb.

With this initial statement, the Damballa rhythm rolled from the drums, as all echoed the song in chorused response, while the possessed figure, in strict conformity to the pattern, first poured water at the central post and then consecutively before the iron and each of the drums. Returning to the central post, he whirled about it, almost but never quite falling, until he could dance before the drums, awkwardly but acceptably, before he disappeared to rest in a near-by house.

796 789 159 793 The explanation offered by this man of the manner in which he became possessed, and his varying attitudes toward his possession, are revealing. On several previous occasions the *hungan* who officiated at the dance had noticed that he was attending *vodun* rites and had joked with him about his interest in them. Once at an earlier dance this *hungan* had

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have a *hungan* divine its identity so that she might thereafter worship it and be under its protection. As in the other case discussed, the personality involved here is not without interest. The woman was one of the shrewdest traders in the Mirebalais market, and noted for her hardness. Underneath this, however, the presence of much vital energy could be felt as well as a passionate desire for gayety and attention from members of the other sex. That the essential lack of satisfaction of these drives in her life, as discussed and observed, figured in bringing on her possession cannot be doubted, and, as such, throws significant light on the nature of the psychological aspects of the phenomenon.

These instances, however, must not be thought of as a regular part of the ritual of the dances. Though a dance was attended almost every Saturday night during the course of an entire summer, and a number of *services* and other *vodun* rites in addition, these were the only occasions when a *loa bossal* appeared. In order, therefore, to document the pattern of the *vodun* dance that has already been given, some of the dances witnessed may be described in outline. 796

The first of these is a dance which, originally intended as the culmination of the *service* described in the preceding chapter, failed to fulfill its end because of a quarrel between two important members of the family. None the less, it proved to be one of the most spirited and typical dances witnessed. The habitation, when reached shortly after six o'clock, was deserted, except for a few people who seemed to be waiting disconsolately. Among them were several *hunsi* in white, [794] and two who carried banners, while the three drums, each [534] "dressed" in its skirt-like covering, stood before the entrance, the drumsticks and the *ogan* lying on the *barrière* itself. Since the *hungan* had not arrived, one or two of the men present took charge as darkness came on. Before this dance began, it was necessary to introduce the drums ceremonially into the compound, and as this was the first *vodun* dance after the es-

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Jean Pétro,	Jean Pétro,
Depuis moin sorti la ville	Since I left town
Moin apé cassé pié moin.	I have broken my foot.
Ça qui fait petit moun fronté.	That is what makes the children impertinent.

Yawé-é-é	Yawé-é-é,
Gedenibo Mazaca	Gedenibo Mazaca,
M'apé rhélé Saints forts	I call the strong saints,
Yawé-é	Yawé-é-é,
Saints forts-é-é	Strong gods-é-é.

P'ti Garçon Lemba,	Little boy Lemba,
P'ti' pilon ça,	A small pestle he,
Na pilé yo, Lemba-o.	Crush them, Lemba-o.

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Finally the instruments were lifted over the *barrière*, the *ogan* and rattles first, then the drums in order from smallest to largest, followed by the spectators. Ahead of the procession were *hunsi* with flags, and all continued singing until the *maison de servitude* and the *tonnelle* used during the *service* were reached.

The drums were carried about the house three times in procession before being taken inside. There, facing the place where the food had been offered — for the house was as yet quite bare, with no suggestion of an altar — the drums were beaten and songs sung to the Rada gods whose sanctuary this was. Though at the moment none of the good drummers had arrived, the drums were placed in line with the north end of the house, and the drumming for the dance commenced. Dancing began about the center pole, but no possessions occurred until shortly after eight o'clock. By that time better drummers had come, and the crowd had so increased that the drums were moved to accommodate those dancing, the drummers now having their backs to the front wall of the sacred house. A candle was attached to a peg of each drum, which, 796 787 [794] was there. To bring him down, a *hunsi* holding water and a candle at once began slowly to dance under him, fixing him with the usual unvarying stare. After some five minutes the candle and water were quickly given to those near by, and in a flash the possessed one was safely on the ground, candle in hand, pouring water before the center pole and the drums, and dancing magnificently.

796 793 787 593 Shortly after midnight the head of the family and his wife returned to the scene of the dance, the explanation given for this return revealing the native conception of the power of the *hungan*. Before his arrival, it was said he had been told of the quarrel; hence on his way to the dance he passed the *barrière* of the house of the family head, though he did not stop to speak with him. Prior to leaving his home, however, he was supposed to have performed a rite which, soon after he began drumming at the dance, so affected the children of the family head that they became possessed and at once ran to the *tonnelle*. Since their children were present, the father and mother were forced to come, and this was followed by a reconciliation of those who had quarreled. To make doubly sure that the *loa* would take no offense, however, another dance which formally ended the *service* was given jointly by all members of the family several weeks later.

796 787 One phase of the ceremonial always encountered, but unusually frequent on this occasion, was the salutation of the assembled company by the *loa*. One woman, possessed by Ogun, greeted all present first by shaking hands with wrists crossed in the customary manner, and then kissing each person on both cheeks. Another, possessed by Ossange, took the neckerchief from about his neck and wiped the faces of all those present, paying particular attention to the drummers. The son of the family head was again possessed by Gede as at the *service*, and his greeting to the assembled company was especially dramatic. His possession took the form of a hysteri-

CHAPTER XII

MAGIC, GOOD AND BAD

In opening any discussion of Haitian magic, the fact must be 789
stressed that magic, though but one of the forces active in the [771]
universe, is a system in itself. As such, it is a thing apart from [794]
the *vodun* cult, a point which must also be emphasized, for
although most writers draw a perfunctory distinction between
magic and *vodun*, this distinction, once stated, is too often
promptly lost sight of.[1] At the same time, the differences be- 789
tween the worship of the *loa* and the practice of magic must 776
not be so juxtaposed as to name the second as the antibody of 771
the first. For, though some of the *loa* can work harm, and some
of them, indeed, are primary forces behind the working of
evil rather than beneficial magic, the good and bad they do is
general in nature. Magic, on the other hand, whether good or [832]
bad, always operates in very specific instances: to cause a given
woman to love a given man, or to make a certain field of a
certain enemy yield poorly.

Yet these distinctions, when drawn, are found in practice to be neither as sharp nor as consistent as the foregoing statements might imply, especially since the system of magic is empowered and validated by many of the *loa*, as well as being closely affiliated with the cult of the dead. The phenomenon dealt with here, and its not illogical contradictions, arise, however, from the fact that the realistic African world view has by

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

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ABOVE, *At a* vodun *dance: those possessed whirling about the central post.*
BELOW, *Making the* vodun *drum: describing the sign of the cross with lighted candles over the unheaded bodies.*

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[facing p. 244]

171 178 782 tion is a further comment both upon the human traits ascribed to them, and upon the realism with which they take cognizance — as only African gods can — of the financial position of their devotees!

171 178 776 778 It is not only in the immediacy of the Haitian gods to their worshippers and in their human qualities, however, that these beings have retained African traits, for in the full reciprocity that must prevail in the relationship between deities and their followers is to be seen a point of view that is entirely non-European. Between man and the gods the rule of *quid pro quo* must always be in operation; and this rule may only be regarded as but another contribution of Africa toward Haitian religious ideology. While this reciprocal giving flavors all aspects of worship whether it be of the *loa*, the dead, or the twins, it takes a yet more prominent, and more familiar place in the field of magic, since here the *engagement* owes much to European belief, though the element of reciprocity is much more emphasized than was ever the case in medieval European diabolism.

178 776 794 The psychological values of the *vodun* cult, especially the general tone found in the feeling toward the terms *Guinée* or *Rada*, perhaps most convincingly show the attitudes that aided in the retention of things recognizably African. For while the [184] Pétro gods are by no means viewed as altogether bad, or are always held unwelcome, the fact that in Mirebalais, as in Haiti generally, the Rada gods are those least feared, most desired, and in connection with whose cult wrongdoing is most rarely present, is of the greatest significance, especially when the related fact is recalled that the Pétro gods are the more powerful in the matter of evil magic, while the Rada deities are said to exert their power to protect their devotees from the dark forces that may be set in motion against them.

178 777 776 In attitudes toward the gods, then, in the names of the gods themselves, in the manner in which they function in the lives of Haitians, and in the importance of the ceremonial con-

nected with them, much of African tradition which has carried over into Haitian religious life has been retained in pure form. Yet the intrusion of Catholic custom into these African patterns — often noted, though generally in passing — also must be studied if the significance of the forms of Haitian folk-religion is to be grasped. That this aspect of *vodun* has received the scant attention it has had is probably to be ascribed to two causes.[8] The first takes the Catholic element for granted, so that even where a particularly dramatic element of Catholic practice is seen in an African setting, such as a crucifix or the portraits of the saints on a *vodun* altar, specific mention is made of this without attempting to dissect its historic or psychological role. The second reason for the comparative disregard of Catholic influence is that for Europeans it is a commonplace. Spirit possession and sacrifices, African song and drum rhythms are more " exciting " than prayers or hymns of the Church. Underlying both these causes is the deep-rooted and unquestioned assumption that, in contact with any non-European culture, the patterns that govern European behavior must prevail. Consequently, is it not in the nature of things that Catholicism should have taken root in the *vodun* cult? Is not rather the matter to be stressed that African traditions should have been retained at all? That the process should actually have been one of amalgamation rather than of dominance is rarely taken into account. Yet to go deeper into the significance of this process in Haitian life is to open far-reaching vistas.

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An outstanding sanction taken by the *vodun* cult from Catholicism is that of the baptismal rites. Though ceremonies of consecration are a commonplace in Africa, and the African ritual of washing the head — *lavé' tête,* as it is termed — has not been forgotten, in Mirebalais the importance of baptism as a means whereby human beings obtain their place in this world and in the next has been carried over and applied to all matters of ceremonial significance. Thus just as in the lives of

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177 77 794 788 778 the saints of the Church the sacrament of baptism was a crucial rite, so the *loa* must be baptized before they become forces which act in a recognized and predictable manner. Just as the objects used in the rituals of the Church must be sanctified by being blessed and sprinkled with holy water, so in the *vodun* cult a *humfort*, the drums, the iron, and the rattle must all undergo a similar sanctification, not only that they may possess proper supernatural power, but more importantly that they may perform their functions in the very serious and African matter of calling the *loa* and placating the supernatural beings of the *vodun* cult.

177 793 794 788 Herein lies the importance of the *prêt' savanne*. Since the official representatives of the Church not only have nothing to do with the *vodun* cult, but excoriate it on all occasions, the *prêt' savanne*, as a man who can read the prayers of the Church, plays an indispensable role and to that extent is to be regarded as a functioning member of the *vodun* cult, despite the fact that he has no control over the *loa* and, as far as was observed, does not participate actively in their worship. At the same time, it must not be inferred that in borrowing " baptism " from the Church this rite has been elevated to the most important place in the ritual of the *vodun* cult, for though the *prêt' savanne* must read prayers " from the book " and sprinkle his holy water, the actual " baptizing " is carried out by the [778] *hungan*. In sanctifying a *humfort*, the end in view is to induce the *loa* to come after the baptism and to insure that no unaccountable or untoward deeds may come to pass within it. Similarly, though drums must be baptized with Church prayers and holy water that they may perform their allotted tasks, without the concomitant ritual of the *hungan* they would be no more empowered to call the gods than they were before the prayers of the Church were read over them. An analogous comparison can be made between the role of the *prêt' savanne* and that of the *hungan* in the *service*. Since the world

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is ruled by God, it is necessary to invoke God with the ritual of His Church before the rites to placate the *loa* may begin. But the important business of the occasion is to placate the *loa*, and it is only when the *hungan* takes over from the *prêt' savanne* that the series of rituals commence which, for the Haitian, hold emotional force and psychological value.

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In the description of the baptism of a *loa* given in a preceding chapter, the use of Church ritual in bringing the African spirits under control will be remembered. No clearer illustration can be given of this merging of traditions than in a detailed account of the manner of making and validating *vodun* drums. These drums are of the characteristic African hollow-log type, with skin heads held in place and tuned by means of pegs, which are tied fast about the drumhead with cord. Before the tree which furnished the bodies was cut, an invocation was pronounced by their maker and an offering — a *mangé sec* — was made, that all the gods might come when called by the finished drums. A candle was lighted and *verver* described about the base of the tree. Eggs, broken against the trunk, were rubbed on the bark; while both soft and alcoholic drinks were given as libations, since not all the gods desire the same refreshment. After the tree had been felled and that part of the trunk that was needed for the drums was cut off, the maker was [322] free to proceed with shaping the bodies of the drums by first gouging out the inside of the trunk, then stripping the bark, and finally carving the characteristic foot at the base. Before the next step of boring the holes for the pegs was taken, *clairin* was poured inside each drum, at the entrance to the habitation of the maker, and toward the man's cornfield. The first hole bored in each drum was carefully marked, for this was the significant *manman*. Here the first peg is inserted; the skin head is first attached here; and here the cord about the head is first knotted; while it is the peg in this hole that must always be first struck when the completed drum is tuned.

[P. 308 is blank]

APPENDIX I

THE GODS OF THE VODUN PANTHEON

ONE of the most impressive facts about studies of Haitian 776
peasant belief is the absence of any attempt at systematic treat- 114
ment of the deities of the *vodun* cult, as concerns either their attributes, their functions, or their relationship to one another. Indeed, there are but two exceptions to this statement; Dorsainvil (I, pp. 174–5) has published a list of the names of gods, placing them in categories according to their African derivations, and Parsons (I, *passim*) has made available her notes on the characteristics of the deities of which she was told while working in the island. Otherwise, one reads merely of " the serpent-god Damballa," or of " Papa Ogun," or some other isolated designation. It therefore seemed of capital im- [121]
portance in making this study to obtain both names of deities and as much information concerning these gods as possible, and the resulting data are presented here.

One reason why perhaps not more of such " systematic the- 776
ology " of *vodun* as exists has been made available is the great 184
degree of individual variation which confronts the student 794
seeking this kind of information, since differences of opinion
are invariably encountered. Even priests do not by any means [793]
agree, for these men and women are supreme individualists, each being the worshipper of particular deities and exploiting special skills, with the result that the frame of reference within

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(093)

which a given priest operates differs from that of his colleagues — though, of course, always within the limitations set by the general pattern of the cult.

This range of opinion cannot be better illustrated than by giving, at the outset, three of the lists of *vodun* deities that were obtained, since here only so simple a matter is involved as names of gods. These lists, it must be remarked, were given by people living in the same valley; were they to be compared with lists collected from other parts of the island even greater disparities would appear, as will be evident if the collection of names of *loa* given by Dorsainvil is consulted. Certain deities, whose names recur below and are also to be found in Dorsainvil's list and in Parsons' notes would be included in any enumeration of gods of the cult, since their worship prevails throughout Haiti. Such would be Legba, Damballa, Aida Wedo, Aizan, Ogun, Agwe, Loko, Shango, Ossange, Bosu, Simbi, Wangol, Baron Samedi, Gede, and Erzilie. Others, though not enjoying as widespread a following, are worshipped over large areas. A number, however, either are gods that have resulted from the process of deifying the souls of those who, in a given locality, were renowned for their spiritual power, or represent survivals of regional African deities that have been preserved in certain large family groups.

Turning now to the lists themselves, the first of these was obtained from a woman functionary of the cult. A single asterisk after a name indicates that its exact counterpart is found in the second list presented here, while two asterisks show the precise name was included in the third listing.

Rada	*Pétro*
Damballa Wedo**	Pétro
Aizan Damballa**	Bosu Trois Cornes*
Aida Wedo	Bosu Djo
Ogun Galloné	Gedeonsu*
Ogun Ferraille* **	'Ti Kita Demembré*
Ogun Balandjo* **	'Ti Jean pié sèche*

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Ogun Sabaho
Legba Avardra
Mon Loa
Solugui
Azao Comble (*or* Coumbe)
Azao Pemba*
Ashade Bokor
Agasu Wedo
Agasu Djeme
Shango
Nago Shango
Acque Fer
Golimé
Agwe Woyo*
Agwesi (*his son*)
Agweta (*his daughter*)
Kadia Bosu
Sobo
Taureau

Congo Zandor* **
Congo Savanne
Congo Wangol
Congo Guinée
Erzilie Mapiangle*
Erzilie Gé rouge* **
Simbi Proméné*
Simbi troi' zilé*
Simbi Wangol
Simbi en Deux Eaux* **
Simbi Galloné
Bakala Baka (*or* Babako Baka)
Lemba Zahou
Bumba*
Gran' Alouba
Gran' Agersi
Gran' Siligbo**
Mait' d'habitation
Mait' Carrefour** (*called* Louis di' fils)
Mari boben
Nangovi
Nangozên
Pélécon*
Ossange Batagri
Ossange Batala
Mait' Mapou (*called* Garçon Mgampé)
Mait' des Eaux
Clairmé
Mme. Clairmé
Clairmézine
Mait' Baleine (Cong' la Mè')

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The second list was given by a woman prominent in the worship of the *loa;* the deities in the preceding list whose names were also included in this (that is, those that were marked with a single asterisk) are not given here, but a double asterisk indicates, as before, that they are also found in the third list.

Rada

Damballa-Aida-Wedo**
Maît' Damballa
Maît' Aizan
Ogun Batagri**
Général Ogun
Legba grand-chemin
Legba nan barrière
Legba Maît' 'bitation
Maît' Azaoû
Maît Ashade
Maît' Bokor
Maît' Agasu
Agweta Woyo
Sobo-Bade
Papa Pierre
Gran' Alouba
Gran' Aguera
Gran' nan Canari (*or* Gosen)
Général Malugué
Lt. Général Jean Baptiste
Gran' Erzilie
Erzilie Freda Dahomey
Maît' Ossange**
Maît' Batala

Pétro

Jean Pétro
Bosu d'l'eaux
Maît' Bosu
Gedenibo**
Gedeou
Maît' Clairmé
Fille Clairmé
Lemba**
Seli-ho

The third list is that given by a minor functionary of the *vodun* cult, known for his ability as a leader of songs. In ad-

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dition to the *loa* marked with doubled asterisks above, the deities he named were:

Rada	*Pétro*
Aizan	Kita
Aizan Marché	Erzilie
Aizan Marché loko	Papa Simbi
Ogun d'l'eaux	Simbi Gran' Bois
Ogun Batala	Simbi Cimitière
Ogun Ashade	Simbi caille moin
Papa Ogun	Simbi Carrefour
Papa Agasu	Simbi Kita
Agasu Tèmèré	Simbi Magie
Siligbo en bas d'l'eaux	Simbi Pétro
Siligbo Vavou	Simbi Macaya
Loko Kisigwé	Gran' Bois
Loko Yai	Baron Samedi
Pa Loko	Gran' Siligbo
Marassa Nundé	
Loa Créole	
Dahomey Freda	

Some of the inconsistencies and individual variations in the naming of the gods as demonstrated in these lists may be specified. Outstanding are the differences found in the manner of naming a single god, as when Général Ogun is called Ogun Galloné or Papa Ogun, or when Aizan Damballa is listed as two *loa*, Maît' Damballa and Maît' Aizan. Lack of agreement, however, is manifested in other ways. Though Taureau is given as a Rada god, during one *vodun* dance for the Rada deities, when a man was possessed by this *loa*, he was quickly led away and brought out of his possession, since Taureau, regarded by the group giving the dance as a Pétro deity, could not properly come to a rite for gods of another "company." Or again, whereas the second list names Maît' Ossange and Maît' Batala as Rada *loa*, the first list places them

776 794 184 in the Pétro group. The Erzilie gods are put in both categories, while Gran' Siligbo, designated in the first list as Pétro, was assigned to both " companies " by the person who gave the third list, and named as a Rada deity by the one who gave the second. Furthermore, the third list, that of the singer, comprises *loa* whose " names " are undoubtedly the result of the acceptance by this man of certain phrases from his songs as valid designations of gods, especially such names as " Aizan Marché Loko " or " Loko Kisigwé." It is not without interest to speculate on this as a possible mechanism by means of which new names are added to the *vodun* pantheon.

Only one of the lists specifically assigned gods to other than the Rada and Pétro categories. One of these was termed *Guinée* and included the following names of deities:

Kaplaou
Enwizo
Wango!
Congo
Loa Sinegal
Cangaron

The other was the Ibo group, accorded two names, the Loa Mondongue and a *loa* named Ibo Lélé.

776 More variable, however, than classifications of the *loa* are accounts of attributes and interrelationships, and details of their worship. Yet certain traits and functions of the gods and aspects of their ritual can be set forth. One way in which [533] the Haitians determine such matters is by reference to the songs sung in honor of the gods. Again and again the texts of such songs were cited as authority, suggesting that they are the " holy word " of *vodun* theology and an important device in stabilizing the details of belief. The attributes of the gods which follow are the result of extended discussions with folk who possessed all degrees of knowledge of the details of the cult and who were all active participants in it.

Legba, guardian of the crossroads, the highway, and the *barrière*, the entrance to every house, yard, or garden, is one of the most important *vodun* deities. He is generally conceived

776 it joins the flooded Artibonite as its master accompanies
823 Clairmé on his way to consult with the great ruler of the
sea, Agwe. Actually, at the height of the rainy season the force
of the light colored muddy water of the major stream holds
back the darker colored flow of its tributaries in a manner
which accords with the legend, so that, observing the Tombe
River at one such time, the Haitians who were present said:
"The Tombe is waiting for its master to pass."

776 Gede, a deity who figures in both the Rada and the Pétro
[184] groups as chief functionary under Baron Samedi, ruler of
[794] cemeteries, is tolerated rather than favored, though his rewards
to his devotees include the refusal to dig a premature
[781] grave for them. When Gede possesses a devotee at a dance,
Damballa, Ogun, and the other Rada gods "leave" at once,
and those who are possessed by them come out of their possessions.
For though Gede is no less a *loa* than other gods, "He
is a *zombi* and is fed apart"; as the Haitians say: "The *loa*
[822] are like human beings. They will not mingle with the dead,
and Gede is of the dead." His color is black, and Saturday
[782] is his sacred day. He "eats" salt herring, hot peppers, cassava,
roasted corn, roasted bananas, and other roasted foods. He
[825] drinks *clairin* — much of it — and at great ceremonies a
black goat and chickens are killed for him, as well as those
chickens with ruffled feathers called *djakati*, which in all the
New World, as in Africa, are believed to discover and dig
up magic charms set against their owners. He lives in the
cemetery, "behind the cross." There are a number of deities
whose names are compounded with the name of Gede —
Gedenibo, Gedeonsu, Gedehun — and hence the question
whether or not this is a generic term or a specific designation is
pertinent. There is no agreement on this point, and it could
only be established that those *loa* who bear the same name,
such as all Ogun or Bosu or Simbi deities, are brothers; but
who the parents of these groups may have been is not known.

Associated with Simbi and Gede in the Pétro "squad" are view from that given here.

[20] Parsons (I), 171, describes how she witnessed a woman "refuse the visitation of her *loa*."

[21] Price-Mars (I), 34, speaks of the "*obligations annuelles de participer par un acte quelconque aux sacrifices cultuels* . . ." laid on the voduist.

[22] St. Mery, i, 51; see also Dorsainvil (I), 46.

[23] Seabrook's description of a "Pétro" ceremony (pp. 31 ff.) deserves, on the basis of its inner inconsistencies, to be considered a masterpiece of misstatement and misinterpretation. Its effect, and the effect of others like it, have done much to perpetuate this incorrect idea of the Pétro rites.

[24] Dorsainvil, Price-Mars, and Parsons all employ these terms, rather than *papaloi* and *mamaloi*, the designations found in more popular books such as those of Craige, Seabrook, and Wirkus. The latter two of these writers seem confused about these words and fail to make it clear whether or not they mean the same or different functionaries of the *vodun* cult when they use the words *houngan* and *papaloi*. 000 114 787

[25] Compare Dorsainvil (I), 75–7 and 121, where he expresses a low opinion of the *hungan*, holding him unreliable and insincere in his worship, as contrasted to the *vrai serviteur*. 793

[26] Op. cit., 175–9.

[27] Even though followers of the *vodun* cult are more organized in some parts of Haiti than in Mirebalais, it is arrant nonsense to speak of a "supreme high priestess" of the cult, its *grande mamaloi*, as does Seabrook, 117, or of a "black pope of voodoo" as Wirkus has done (in *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 168, pp. 38–49, 188–98; December 1933–January 1934). 114 794 114 114

[28] A sober statement of the degrees of initiation into the cult (although these do not hold for Mirebalais) is to be found in Dorsainvil (I), 168–9, and also 62. 794

CHAPTER IX

[1] Price-Mars (I), 144, gives a long and excellent list of the reasons for offering sacrifices.

[2] A description of a *humfort* destroyed by the Marines during their occupation, and a detailed account of its

contents, is given by Wirkus, 178-9.

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• Compare this description with the *humfort* pictured in Johnston, p. 194.

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• It is to be emphasized that in the course of the *vodun* rituals witnessed during this field-work, none of the "frenzy of the blood lust" that is so favorite an aspect of these ceremonies with writers of books on Haiti was encountered. As an extreme example of this heightening of the tone with which a ceremony is described, the work of Seabrook may be cited, for phrases such as "blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened" used by him mark perhaps an all-time record for distortion of the inner discipline of the *vodun* cult.

• Cf. Parsons's brief sketch, (I), 172-3, of a *mangé loi*, though the "bloody anointing" of which she speaks was not seen to occur in Mirebalais *services*. Detailed descriptions of what apparently were *services* are given by Wirkus, 168 ff., who, though honest in recounting what he saw, realized nothing of its significance; and Seabrook (pp. 54-70), who reads so much into what he purports to have witnessed that the entire account is rendered useless.

CHAPTER X

[1] Compare Parsons (I), 167-72.

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[2] The drunkenness at serious dances reported by Parsons (I), 172, and others, would not be tolerated in Mirebalais.

[3] Price-Mars (I), 208, gives the name of *assotôr* for the great drum.

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[4] Much nonsense has been written concerning these drums. Many writers — all non-Haitians — stress the existence of a drum language, which seems to be an assertion of dubious truth.

[5] This is a striking example of what Dorsainvil (I), 73-4 and 131 ff., calls the *masque vôduique* in detailing the effects of possession on the features of the possessed. See also the discussion of possession in Price-Mars (I), 122-3. The Gede possession described by Craige, 73-4, must, on the basis of customary Haitian behavior under possession, be subject to reinterpretation.

[6] Cf. Parsons (I), 170.

2: Courlander SV3 Haiti SV3

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[For a listing of cult and ritualistic dances, see category 116, pp. 134-136.]

2: Courlander SV3 Haiti SV3

● 794

[For a listing of the Vodoun Pantheon, see category 116, pp. 318-327; the ambivalent Simbi family pantheon, pp. 327-328; the Ibo and Kanga pantheons, p. 328; and the Congo and Pétro pantheons, pp. 328-331.]

[P. 8]

2. Man and the Universe: Vodoun

175 When the African slaves stepped ashore in the New World they brought
177 with them highly developed religious beliefs and attitudes toward life.
771 But Africa was a continent of many cultures and nations, and its belief systems varied. The Congo African did not have the same view of the natural and supernatural as the Senegalese, for example; and even neighboring peoples such as the Ibos, the Yorubas, and the Mahis did not have common religious traditions. Yet in the strange new land that was Haiti, the common elements in their religious beliefs were accented. In time a new composite religious system emerged. It was called Vodoun.

175 The preponderance of Africans in Haiti came from the region of Da-
167 homey, Togoland, Nigeria, and the Congo River basin. Among them the
177 Dahomeans were the most numerous, and it was they who provided the
771 framework for the Afro-Haitian religious system.

The word Vodoun itself is Dahomean in origin. Among the Fon-speak-
192 ing people of West Africa it signified "spirit," or "deity." In Haiti the word came to be applied in a general sense to all the activities of cult life, from the ritual of the "temple" to the songs and dances, though in some old songs it still applies specifically to the idea of a supernatural spirit. However, the Congo word *loa* came to be used to designate the deities.[1]

771 In a literal sense, Vodoun in Haiti consists of the rites, beliefs, and prac-
● 794 tices of the Vodoun cult, built around the similar religious systems of the
177 Dahomeans and the Nagos. In a wider sense it applies to similar but distinct ritual activities of other cults. The Ibo-Kanga rites and dances are in a specific sense "not quite" Vodoun. The rites in the Congo-Guinée cult group—made up of Congo, Bambarra, "Guinée," and miscellaneous elements—have separate practices and deities of their own, and are often regarded as not Vodoun at all. Yet the term Vodoun is used in a generic sense to include all these rites, and examination of the beliefs and activities of these cult groups shows that they have drawn in considerable measure upon a common inheritance.

[1] [See Courlander, Haiti Singing, p. 7. Cf. P349, category 116.--Analyst]

771 Vodoun is clearly more than ritual of the cult temple. It is an integrated system of concepts concerning human behavior, the relation of mankind to those who have lived before, and to the natural and supernatural forces of the universe. It relates the living to the dead and to those not yet born. It "explains" unpredictable events by showing them to be consistent with established principles. In short, it is a true religion which attempts to tie the unknown to the known and thus create order where chaos existed before.

771 793 794 776 As in Dahomey, it is not a system imposed from above but one which pushes out from below. It is bred and nurtured in the family, in the towns, and in the fields. It is common law, with deep roots in an unbroken and continuous past. The priests of Vodoun do not control it and direct its course. They, like the least fortunate peasant, simply move about within it and make use of its resources. They are its servants and its interpreters. In their cult centers, the principles of Vodoun are brought into sharp focus and dramatized. Vodoun is democratic in concept. Any man or woman may have direct contact with the deities or dead ancestors without the intervention of the cult priest. There is no place or situation beyond the influence of the loa or beyond the limits of Vodoun. At every crossroads is the spirit of the crossroads guardian, Legba, and on every long trail is the spirit of the Master of the Highway.

793 182 The cult priest nevertheless plays a significant and essential role. He translates beliefs that otherwise might tend to become amorphous into formalized action. He is a teacher, a repository of cult learning, and a vital catalyst. He gives form to abstraction, and practical meaning to symbols. He is the intellectualizing agency of a tremendous emotional force. Through his knowledge of the substance and forms of Vodoun, his experience in dealing with the loa, and in some instances his capacity to set magical forces into action, the cult priest is a dynamic power within his community.

793 789 754 771 Though the making of *pouins* and *magie* (ritual magic) and *ouangas* (aggressive magic directed against individuals) is within the realm of the cult priest's activities, these things are part of Vodoun only in a subsidiary sense. Magic lurks on the periphery of Vodoun. It has little or no place in the placating of the deities or the dead. It concerns the relationship of the living with each other and with *lou-garos* (*loups-garous*) and *baka* (demons). Although cult rituals include various pouin and magic ceremonies, the cult priest draws upon magic as he draws upon other mystic arts and fields of learning—leaf doctoring, divination, Catholic ritual, and Masonic symbolism. He attempts to bring together all thinking that widens the scope of Vodoun, in order to strengthen his hand to deal with

789 all aspects of the natural and supernatural. But the reputable cult priest
771 does not dabble in "black" magic—the kind that maims or destroys hu-
793 man beings. One who does so is said to "work with two hands": one for
754 the loa and one for evil. (The expression *servi dé main*—"serving with two hands"—is also applied to a cult chief who deals with deities of more than one "nation.") Many a cult priest in making his ritual flour drawings on the earth holds his left hand behind his back and draws with his right, giving testimony that he "works with one hand" only.

793 Each cult priest maintains his own cult temple, or *hounfor*. There are
794 no cult officials above him, as there is no formal religious organization
[346] beyond the hounfor itself. Within his own special community he is therefore the chief religious functionary, the apex of an intratemple social organization. Under the cult priest, ordinarily, there are two grades of assistants, and below them two classes of servitors.

793 The cult priest is usually referred to as a *houngan*, a Fon (Dahomean)
787 title signifying "spirit chief." Sometimes he is called *gangan* (a Bantu
171 word meaning "conjuror" or "doctor")[2] or *capla*. He also is known by
791 the title *bocó* or *bocor*, which seems to be derived from *bocono*, the diviner or priest of the Dahomean Fa cult.[3] The bocor is, in fact, sometimes referred to as a *divineur*, and he is regarded by some Haitians as a clairvoyant and a practitioner of magic. As in Dahomey, the bocor in Haiti foretells fate through the throwing of shells or chips, much in the manner of the secular game *mayamba*. He also reads destiny with small sticks or ashes. In earlier days the cult priest was sometimes known by the Yoruba name *babalao*, a title which has been corrupted to *papaloi*. A female cult leader is known as a *mambo*. She is presumed to have, in a general way,
[562] the same powers as the houngan, though in some quarters her *connaissance*, or "understanding," is not regarded so highly, and her status is believed to be somewhat lower.

794 Directly under the houngan is his chief assistant, the *laplace*, and perhaps a little below him on the ladder, the *mambo caille*. The laplace is regarded as the vice-houngan, and he assumes responsibility for running the hounfor in the absence of his chief. The mambo caille, a woman, runs the cult center in the absence of both the houngan and the laplace. One step farther down the ladder is the *houngénicon*, who acts as a sort of chief of the main body of devotees. These high-ranking assistants to the houngan are sometimes called *badjicans*, or keepers of the altar.

[171] The servitors of the cult are known as *hounsi*, or "spirit wives," a name that was given to certain categories of cult servants in Dahomey.[4] There are two main groups of hounsi: *kanzo* (those who have passed through a ritual fire test) and *bossale* (those whose loa are wild or untamed). The

[2] [Footnote appears on p. 349, Category 116.--Analyst]

[3] [Gorer, *Africa Dances*, p. 129; Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 208 ff. Cf. p. 349, Category 116.--Analyst]

[4] [Foot note appears on p. 349, Category 116.--Analyst]

The
loa makes his appearance in Vodoun ritual by possessing ("mounting") 794
one or more of the participants. When these possessions first occur, the 787
possessed persons lapse into a kind of frenzy without controls or direction. 776
They may stagger, fall, and go into convulsions. The deity must be controlled so that he will not harm the person whose body he takes over. The [793]
houngan eventually establishes a conditioned, formalized response to possession; and once this is achieved, the loa is regarded as having been tamed.
The *hounsi bossale* then becomes eligible for elevation to the status of 794
kanzo. The term *kanzo* means "to tie fire"; that is, to conquer or show mastery over fire. Demonstrations of supremacy of possessed persons over flames, hot coals, and red-hot metal characterize many Vodoun rituals. In the kanzo ritual the initiate must undergo the test of boiling oil.

The hierarchy of the cult temple, in general, looks like this: 794 [793]

Houngan (or *Mambo*)—chief of the hounfor
Laplace—first assistant to the houngan
Mambo caille—"mistress of the house"
Houngénicon—topmost of all the hounsi
Hounsi kanzo—the highest grade of hounsi
Hounsi bossale—the lowest grade of hounsi

Among the hounsi there are some who have special duties or functions. There is the *reine silence*, for example, whose job is to maintain order. The one assigned to cook the various sacrifices is called the *hounsi cuisinière*, and so on.

There is no single, clear-cut process for becoming a Vodoun priest. A 793
man with special talents may rise from the rank of hounsi and eventually become a houngan by succession. Or a person with a strong *connaissance* may simply feel the call—sometimes in a dream—and establish himself as a houngan or bocor. If such a man demonstrates that he is "strong," a following will gather around him to constitute his *société*.

When a houngan dies, his cult center may be abandoned, or it may be taken over by another established houngan or by the deceased man's protégé. Frequently the laplace will inherit the cult temple and all that goes with it. Acquisition of a cult center by inheritance is looked upon as a means of keeping an established hounfor intact. The man who wishes to achieve the rank of houngan applies to the oldest and most venerable cult priest in the district and announces that he wishes to receive the *asson* (the ritual rattle) that is, to become a houngan. If the elder priest approves and wishes to sponsor the younger man's elevation, he consults other reputable houngans and arranges for a *grand service* for purification and investiture. The elder cult priest conducts the ceremonies. He is regarded as especially wise because of his age and long experience in dealing with the loa, whose

793 approval of the candidate's elevation is needed. He is also regarded as [969] being on more intimate terms with the family ancestors who, likewise, [783] must be in accord with the proceedings. The candidate for the asson is confined within the hounfor for a number of days, during which he takes purification baths and participates in other rituals. The rites that take place during this period are prescribed by the elder priest who has assumed responsibility. When the purification is ended, the candidate emerges into the *peristyle* (roofed court) to participate in the general service, and to undergo further tests.

Present during the ceremonies are all the principal houngans of the region—men who will be friendly associates of the new priest or, [789] possibly, unfriendly competitors. The candidate is tested on his knowledge of how to use the asson and the tiny hand bell, and in the course of the service he is mounted by the loa who is the chief protector of the cult [782] temple. Animals are sacrificed, and all the loa sacred to the hounfor are invoked and asked for their approval and support. But it is not only the loa ● [794] and the dead who must indicate their approval. The elder houngan polls the hounsi kanzo on whether they will accept their new cult chief and [533] follow him. He also asks the chief drummer, who polls his assistant drummers. It is taken for granted that the decision is in the hands of the hounsi. The consensus is known before the actual service, but the formality of asking the question is observed. Should the hounsi refuse to accept the candidate for the asson, the elevation cannot take place.

793 The city and the countryside contain many self-styled houngans and 554 bocors who are not recognized as bona fide by the community, regardless 626 of the route by which they claim to have achieved their station. Sometimes [791] they are regarded as *pas fort (not strong)*; that is, they do not have profound knowledge and understanding. The Haitian is quick to detect the difference between a houngan who knows and one who does not know. Many are stated to be outright fakes. One man who attempted to hold a service in Port-au-Prince aroused such contempt and disgust that a number of persons who had been drawn by genuine interest walked out with remarks that the man should be punished. In fact, his failure to show any [533] essential qualifications for the houngan's role was commented upon in a song of ridicule that made its appearance at a secular dance that same night. The song noted some of the humorous aspects of the service, such as when the "impostor" struck himself vigorously on the head with the flat of a machete to show his "strength" and virtually incapacitated himself for the rest of the evening.

346 It is easily observed that no two hounfors are exactly alike. They differ

in many details. But, in general, the cult establishment consists of a central 346
building of one or more rooms with an adjoining court, or peristyle,
over which there is a covering—usually a straw roof. The covering, called
the *tonnelle,* is supported by a number of poles, one of which is placed
squarely in the center of the court. This center pole—the *po'teau mitan* or 346
po'teau planté—is the focus of most of the ritual activities. The loa who 796
descend upon the service enter by way of this pole. The ritual *vèvès,* or [796]
flour paintings, are made at its foot. Around it all the dancing takes place.
On certain rare occasions when rituals are held in the open, a carefully
selected tree becomes the center post—though it is by no means certain
that the po'teau mitan is not, in fact, a symbolic tree.

The building adjoining the peristyle contains the inner sanctum. Here 346
are deposited the paraphernalia of the cult, such as ritual bottles and jars, 794
flags of the société, and the iron kettles used in various ceremonies. On the 778
walls there may be primitive paintings of the special loa of the hounfor, 776
or perhaps of his symbol. The loa of the sea, Agwé, may be represented 353
by a ship. Damballa, the serpent-rainbow loa, may be represented by a [796]
snake or a rainbow. Usually there are colored lithographs of Catholic
saints, who have both Catholic and African names. And there are handbeaten
iron crosses, dishes containing Indian celts in which loa are believed
to reside, gourd bowls, and carved wooden double and triple bowls
used for services to dead twins and triplets. Upon the altar place, called
badji, there are the *criches* or *govis,* earthen jars or bottles in which rest
the loa removed from the heads of people who have died. Sometimes
special niches are built on the hounfor grounds for the deities. Each cult
priest designs his hounfor in his own way.

A hounfor belonging to a mambo near the town of Croix des Missions 346
gave the appearance of having a large and prosperous société. Under the 794
tonnelle eight beautifully carved Arada drums were suspended from a 353
single peg. At a respectable distance hung a Martinique drum used only 778
for dances on the occasion of a Nine Night. Inside the hounfor was an [534]
impressive display of sacred objects and decorations. One corner of the [796]
room was reserved for Symbi Yendézo, a patron loa of drinking water [776]
and rainfall. He was portrayed on the wall as a long, thin snake crawling
in a maze of crosses. On the ground beneath the picture was a small concrete
pool, in which two water snakes swam. Another corner was reserved
for Agwé, and on his wall was a picture of a steamship. Along the back
of the altar was an impressive array of govis, containing the spirits removed
from the heads of deceased persons. There was a large plate of loa
stones, and various protective charms stood near by. Flags and sabres

346 794 353 778 were stacked against the wall, and set about in various places were several assons, iron crosses, Catholic lithographs, chains and iron bars for the loa Ogoun, candles set in bottles, and an old forged double bell of African design.

346 353 Some of the hounfors found elsewhere are more elaborate and reflect the richer resources of the immediate community, or the creative impulses of the houngan and his helpers, or the pressure of competition. Some cult temples are prolific with painted designs and symbolic representations of the deities. Others are unpretentious, simple, and even Spartan.

346 [113] In his book *En Haiti,* written approximately fifty years ago, Eugene Aubin describes a hounfor in the Cul-de-Sac Plain, a few miles from Port-au-Prince, as he saw it in 1906:

> 346 353 794 778 [The] ***hounfor*** is fronted by a ***peristyle,*** which is used for the Vodoun dances and services; it is a large area, with a floor of beaten earth, covered with a straw roof. On three sides the walls rise to support the roof; on the fourth there is the inscription:
>
> ***Société la Fleur de Guinée***
> ***Roi d'Engole***
> **[*Flower of Africa Society*
> *King of Angola*]**
>
> indicating the name of the patron of the society [the loa Roi Angole, or Wangol], over which the ***houngan*** presides. The ***hounfor*** is an ordinary house, a little larger than average. The sanctuary contains a principal ***pé*** [altar], running the whole length of the room on one side, and another altar, a little smaller, in one of the corners. These ***pés*** are altars largely made of brick, in which the under part is decorated with hearts and stars in relief; above, draperies hang from the ceiling. The
> [776] lateral ***pé*** is divided into three compartments. There are, therefore, four sections in all, consecrated to each of the ***loa*** served in the ***hounfor:*** Aguay Aoyo [Agwé Woyo], Damballa, Ogoun Badagry, and Loco [Loko], Nago King. Maître Aguay is represented by the customary little boat; a medallion is consecrated to Monsieur Damballa, shown holding two snakes in his hand; a figure on horseback represents Ogoun Badagry, with a woman at one side holding a flag; Papa Loco is pictured in full uniform, smoking a pipe and fanning himself. The walls are covered with religious paintings [Catholic lithographs]. The back of the altar is occupied by numerous carafes in baked clay, called ***canaris,*** which contain the . . . ***mystères*** [spirits taken from the heads of the dead] gathered in the ***hounfor;*** in front are bottles of wine, liqueurs and vermouth presented to them in homage; then the plates, the cups for the ***mangers-marassas*** [feasts for the twin spirit], crucifixes, hand bells, ***assons*** for directing the dance or calling the ***loa;*** plates filled with polished stones [celts] inherited from the Indians—"thunder stones," symbols of Damballa, which Saugo [Sobo] the god of lightning hurls from the sky into the enclosure of his favorite ***papaloi*** [***houngan***]. Beside these miraculous stones are many coins of copper or silver [property of the ***loa***]. The ***loa*** . . . possess coins of Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain, minted in 1811; of Frederick VII of Denmark, 1859; of Charles IV of Spain, 1783, and of President Boyer, dated year 27 and year 30 of Haitian Independence. On the ground there is placed a coconut-oil lamp; in the corner, the flags of the ***hounfor*** and the saber of [the] ***laplace,*** the man who acts as master of ceremonies in the services.

They know where the sun rises,
793 and they address St. Nicholas, who opens the day, and they know the wish
78 of God. In the name of St. Nicholas they raise a glass of water and ask
[177] God for the power to do."
[976]

In ordinary usage the Haitian refers to the various cults or "nations"
● 794 as though they were quite separate and mutually exclusive. He speaks of
184 the *service* Pétro, or *rite* Nago, or the *nanchon* Ibo. Yet in practice the cults
78 are usually bound together into two or three major groups.

The "nations" belonging to the Vodoun (or Dahomey) group include the Arada or Dahomé, the Anago, the Mahi, the Amine, and the Ibo. There is ample evidence that the cults of these "nations" were once separate and apart. Even today in isolated regions of Haiti there are cult centers devoted exclusively to Nago deities. Elsewhere, Mahi or Ibo services are held without the intrusion of "foreign" rites and deities. Some cult centers have several hounfors—one for Dahomé, one for Nago, one for Ibo, and so on, with a separate building for the "dead" spirit Gèdé. More often, however, one finds a single hounfor containing separate altars. Of all the "nations" within the Vodoun group, the Ibo perhaps has the most independent status, and in some regions it is tied in with Pétro rather than Vodoun rites.

The Pétro group also includes numerous "nations," some completely absorbed, others more loosely affiliated. Within this group, which for convenience may be called the Congo-Guinée family, are the Pétro, Bumba, Moundongue, Bambarra, Congo Loangue (Loango), and other "nations." In certain regions the Congo cult, like the Ibo, is regarded as separate and apart. Sometimes the Pétro service is kept distinct from the others, though it has drawn so heavily on them for its roster of deities that the distinction is not easily seen. In places such as Port-au-Prince where the cults have deeply infiltrated one another, major differences between the Vodoun and Congo-Guinée rites have disappeared, and altars to both Pétro and Dahomé deities may be found within the same hounfor.

It is not difficult to detect a certain pattern of regional grouping within the Vodoun and Congo-Guinée families. Within the Vodoun family are gathered "nations" from Dahomey, Togoland, and Nigeria, while in the Congo-Guinée cycle are "nations" from Central Africa, miscellaneous "nations" such as the Bambarra, and the Pétro cult which is regarded as "Haitian" rather than "African," but whose rites and loa have been recruited in large measure from other services.

One often hears of Kitta services, or Chango services, or Legba rites. These are not separate cults but simply rituals for specific loa.

The loa, like the rites, vary somewhat according to region and to the
practices of the individual cult priests. New concepts spring up, and they 776
thrive in one locality while remaining unheard of in another. Yet many 184
new concepts travel from hounfor to hounfor. As in the old days in 793
Dahomey, the Vodoun priests sometimes make journeys to visit other cult 794
centers. At one service near Jacmel, on the south coast, I met a houngan 787
from Dondon in the far north and heard him discuss with the local cult chief the appropriate behavior of a loa who had mounted a servitor. The Dondon houngan declared that in the north the loa conducted himself differently. The Jacmel houngan parried with the remark that a loa's behavior is consistent. He said there were only two possibilities concerning the possession as described by the cult chief from Dondon: either the loa had been mistakenly identified, or another deity had attempted to impersonate him. Such exchanges hasten the spread of developing theology from one area to another. They also raise contradictions which remain forever insoluble.

That confusions and contradictions are not merely of Haitian making is 114
made clear by Herskovits' voluminous study of the pantheons of Da- 794
homey.[2] Each of the great cults—the sky cult, the earth cult, and the 177
thunder cult—has its own explanations of the origins and functions of the deities; and even within one cult there are contradicting explanations. The Haitians have taken over, built upon, and diverged from a Dahomean system that contained its own contradictions. In adding to it the system of the Yoruba, with its parallelisms and similarities, they have made the whole picture more complex than ever.

[2] [Herskovits, Dahomey. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]

5. *Services for the Loa and the Family Ancestors*

THE ORDEAL BY FIRE: KANZO

To advance beyond the lowest status in the hounfor, the hounsi must 794
undergo the test of fire. This ritual is known as *kanzo,* meaning "to tie 789
fire." In the drama of the hounfor there are many tests and ordeals. When 796
certain loa enter, the mounted persons will eat broken glass. Other loa 787
will cause their "horses" to rub hot pepper in their eyes. Still others will compel possessed persons to cut themselves with machetes. But these are bravado actions of the deities who have entered into the bodies of the servitors. The kanzo test is a formalized and premeditated ritual, in which it is demonstrated that the power of the cult—and the spirit of the individual—is superior to fire. Once having passed through this rite, the ordinary hounsi becomes a *hounsi kanzo.*

The kanzo ceremony—or, as it is known in some parts of Haiti, the *brulé zin* (the boiling pot)—is performed in diverse ways according to the tradition of the particular hounfor. But common to all is the dipping of the hands into boiling oil.

The common hounsi, the bossale, is prepared gradually for kanzo. In *the course of certain rites she undergoes a smoke ordeal. On all fours, her* head close to a fire, she must breathe in smoke without choking or coughing. When these and other tests indicate that she is ready, she will be permitted to undergo the rite of the brulé zin.

Near the town of Thomazeau in the Cul-de-Sac Plain I witnessed one of these rituals. It began with a dance, in which only the hounsi of the cult participated. They were all dressed in white. The chief drummer wore a woman's blouse, a kerchief on his head, and on top of that a woman's straw hat. He played alone while the houngan invoked the loa Legba. [793]
Then there were songs for Ogoun, and the dancing resumed.

The dance court was larger than average—about forty feet by sixty.

793 Attached to the ever-present po'teau mitan, or center post, were three oil
● 794 lamps which threw a flickering light. At the entrance to the dance court
787 a glowing-hot iron bar stood erect in a charcoal fire—the symbol of kanzo
796 and of the loa Ogoun.

789 When the preliminary dances were over, the hounsi retired to one side of the court, where they sat in two rows facing the center.

Ritual rattle and bell in hand, the houngan took his place by the sacred center post. He was an elderly man with a gray beard. He wore a red kerchief like a turban around his head. He smoked a cigar, and in his free hand he held a bottle of rum. The red kerchief, the rum, and the cigar were all in honor of Ogoun. He moved back and forth across the center of the court, talking casually, even joking and laughing. The drums began again, on a signal from the houngan, and a number of visiting houngans [535] and mambos came forward and began a stately Jenvalo dance. The backs of their hands touching their knees, their backs bent low, they moved slowly counterclockwise around the center post. The mambos outnumbered the houngans four to one. The hounsi sitting on the sidelines sang. The song was for Maîtresse Ezilie. The houngan in charge stood by patiently, deep in thought. His assistant, the laplace, kept time with a small rattle and led the singing.

When the song came to an end, the visiting cult priests and priestesses retired from the dance ground. Again the hounsi danced. Afterward the houngan began to talk *langage*, twirling his bottle of rum about recklessly. He was speaking to a loa. The chief drummer beat out a salute to Ogoun. Then the houngan raised the bottle and placed it to his ear. It gurgled away, some of the liquid trickling down his face. He seemed to be swallowing the rum.

While all the hounsi, with bowed heads, sat on the ground, the houngan recited from the ritual of the Catholic service. Latin words, then Creole words in Latin cadences. After a while the houngan's assistant took over the recitation, and the hounsi answered him responsively.[1] When the prayers were over, *the hounsi arose and passed into the houmfor*. The drums began a fast Nago rhythm, and the hounsi emerged with brilliant silk flags studded with tiny brass rivets. The houngan's chief assistants—the laplace and the houngénicon—carried military sabers upraised. The dancers circled in single file around the center post, a triumphal military heralding of the deity of war and the forge.

To the accompaniment of a crescendo of drums, the procession suddenly reversed its direction. Watching the upraised saber of the laplace for a signal, the hounsi reversed their direction again.

000 [2]When the dance drama ended, the hounsi carried the flags back into

[Note that the houngan and the laplace are performing services normally performed by the Prêt savane. Cf. P. 351, Category 116. -- Analysis] when the dance drama ended, the hounsi carried the flags back into

the hounfor. Then they sat on the ground while the houngan came forward to the center post to make his ritual flour drawing. Holding the flour in his hand, he allowed a little of it to trickle out in a fine white line. He worked rapidly, with half-closed eyes, speaking *langage*. A complicated white geometric pattern grew on the earth around the center post. Among its intricate designs highly stylized phallic forms were discernible. When the houngan had finished the drawing, he wrote the name of the loa whom they were serving: Ogoun Badagry. Then the other houngans and mambos came forward, one at a time, to add to the design. When the vèvè was completed it covered virtually the entire dance court. 793 794 787 784 796 532

The laplace came from the hounfor with a bundle of brilliantly colored beads. He stood by the houngan at the center post. One by one the hounsi came before the houngan, dropped on their knees, and kissed the ground. Around each hounsi's neck the houngan placed a string of beads. He raised her, pirouetted her first to the right, then to the left. The pirouette was to encourage possession by the loa. 793 794 787 784 796

From the hounfor the hounsi now brought herbs and vegetables for the sacrifice. Baskets and bottles were set out neatly on the ground, along with bundles of sticks and the iron pots, or *zins*. [782]

The dance was resumed in a single rotating line around the houngan and the ritual offerings. Two hounsi in the center of the circle built fires, one on each side of the court. Over the fires they set the ritual iron pots. They poured oil into the pots and began the preparation of ritual food balls, like dumplings, from the ingredients at hand. One by one they dropped the dumplings into the oil, which was soon boiling.

The drumming, singing, and dancing were sustained at a high tension. A second team of drummers took over without a break in the music. The dancers now were almost exhausted. With a quick motion, the houngan spilled some rum into one of the boiling pots. A blue alcohol flame shot high into the air. Some of the hounsi screamed but continued to dance. Three of them fell to the ground, their limbs jerking uncontrollably. The loa had entered. Two of the "mounted" hounsi arose and continued to dance, staggering and jerking across the dance court. The third had to be lifted and carried into the hounfor.

The man who was to undergo initiation was waiting in the *djévo*, a special room in the hounfor. For the past seven days he had lain on a mat in the djévo, in virtual isolation except for visits from the houngan and the laplace.

Now the kanzo initiate was brought out, completely covered with a white cloth. Only his hands and feet could be seen. With one hand on the shoulder of the laplace, who preceded him, he moved with the dancers

794 787 789 796 793 in a circle around the two boiling pots. On the seventh circuit of the course, the laplace stopped him at the first pot. The houngan grasped the man's free hand and, bending down, dipped it into the boiling oil. There was no visible indication of pain. They moved to the second pot, and the man's hand was dipped again. They proceeded again to the first pot, where the dipping was repeated, then back again to the second pot. The neophyte's hand entered the boiling oil seven times in all. He made no sound, showed no resistance, no reflexes. Then the hounsi took him back to the hounfor. It was all over. After three days of isolation, they said, he would be kanzo.

The houngan peeled an orange, while everyone crowded close to watch. In it he found a two-gourde note. He peeled another orange and found in it a slip of paper with the name of a woman on it. She came forward, and everyone laughed. She was an old woman, the oldest of the hounsi. The houngan held the two-gourde note between his teeth. The old woman took the other end of the note in her teeth, but she had to kiss the houngan before he would let go.

796 794 171 The ritual of brulé zin, or kanzo, is of unmistakable West African origin. Herskovits has described a ceremony in Dahomey which in many details could easily have taken place in Haiti. The Dahomean rite was in honor of the gods of the Thunder pantheon. Here, too, we find a pot of boiling palm oil, in which are the sacred dumplings: "When the fire had finally subsided and only a faint column of smoke issued from the pot, the initiate came dancing toward it, thrust her hand into the boiling oil, and lifted out a dumpling. . . ."[8]

FAMILY RITES AT LÉOGANE

769 796 787 778 These services for family ancestors took place in the mountains above Léogane at the ancestral home of my friend Libera Borderau. They were conducted on the grounds of his grandmother's house. The ritual began with dancing. Against the wall of the house sat the three drummers with their Arada drums. Near them, leaning against the wall, were the flags of the family loa. Also near by was a long high table serving as a makeshift altar called the *pé*. In the very center of the table in a clean white dish lay eight loa stones—old Carib artifacts. The stones were identical in shape, all of them perfectly symmetrical, resembling small, pointed cigars. In the *pierre-loas* lived the family deities, and much of the ceremony was built around them. The stones had been bathed and polished in oil for the occasion. Set around the plate of stones were numerous small *crickes* (French, *cruches*—clay water jugs), glass bottles, and earthenware jars which also contained loa. On the low bench before the table, seven dishes

[8] [Herskovits, Dahomey, II, 165. Cf. P 351, Cat 116—[illegible]]

were set out in a row, and before them four *couis*, the half-gourd bowls 769
used in services to the marassas, the twin spirits. 796

In the house, at the center of the floor, was a round flat stone about ten 787
inches in diameter and about two inches thick, resembling a millstone. 773
This was the *pierre-manman*, the mother stone responsible for the coming of the other loa stones and who cared for them in the absence of the family. In this stone, they said, was the spirit of the old loa Nananbouclou. On a mat in the corner of the room two children slept.

Outside, on a chair, his back against the wall of the house, the houngan 769
sat, his rattle and bell in hand. He had come several miles to conduct the 796
service. Most of those who danced were his own hounsi. The houngan 787
was "strong" and well known in the region; people said he had worked 773
for high government officials, including the president himself.

After several rounds of Arada dancing in which children as well as 769
adults took part, the drums stopped. The houngan and his laplace moved 796
up to the building which served for the night as the houmfor. It was up a 795
steep slope, about a hundred feet from the dance court. There they pre- 787
pared for the sacrifice to Chêbo Profiel, the honored loa of the evening. Passing in and out among the spectators was a woman who would be possessed by Papa Chêbo; since he was the guest of the service, she (or the loa in her head) was free to come and go as she chose, to speak as she pleased, and to do what she wished. Mostly she shook hands with people, a ceremony which continued throughout the night. First she would offer the right hand, then the left; or perhaps both at once, in which case the hands would be shaken downward vigorously three or four times. Someone ignorantly said, "Bon soir, Madame!" and she turned on him to reprimand his insolence. She was not "Madame," she was *l'Autorité*, the Authority.

During the course of the evening the conviction became stronger and stronger in her that she was Chêbo Profiel. From the time we first saw her until the end of the evening her personality underwent marked changes. She "became" Papa Chêbo.

The houngan sat before a small hole, possibly a foot deep and ten inches 782
in diameter, in front of the houmfor. The fresh earth was piled neatly to 783
the side, and an enameled plate was set on top of it. Around the hole were 786
the various dishes to be offered to Chêbo Profiel. The laplace prayed in 787
Latin, a short Catholic service. Then the houngan, shaking his beaded 769
rattle and tinkling his bell, called for Chêbo to "enter." He made a small
maize-flour drawing around the hole, and then began the feeding of the [702)
loa. The plates arranged for the feast contained roasted maize, roasted peanuts, bread, cassava, rice, and other foods. There were bottles of rum,

793 kola (a soft drink), *clairin*, and syrup. The houngan, entreating Chêbo to
796 accept, poured a little *clairin* into the hole. The loa seemed to accept, for
782 the *clairin* was quickly absorbed in the ground. The houngan took rice
787 from the plate with his fingers, about the amount he might place in his
769 own mouth, and put it gently into the hole. He was feeding Papa Chêbo,
literally placing the food in his mouth. After the rice, which was dry, the houngan poured in a little more *clairin* to moisten it. He ordered the laplace to break up the bread, and then he placed a small piece in the hole and washed it down with a little rum. The houngan seemed to understand that Papa Chêbo Profiel was hungry, and that he was also an epicure. He allowed him to taste the roasted corn, and then washed it down with a trickle of kola. Then he gave him a taste of the roasted peanuts, and another morsel of bread. Once Chêbo got his mouth too full in his zest for the meal, and the assemblage had to wait for him to finish "coughing." Then the houngan gave him a long drink of kola to clear his windpipe. After that the houngan was more careful in the way he fed him—a little cassava, a drink, a little bread. As the houngan fed the loa, some of the spectators reached over and placed small coins in the empty dish by the hole. These too were for Chêbo. Finally, Chêbo was through eating. The *food was gone.*

769 The houngan, shaking his rattle and his bell, blew two sharp notes on
798 his whistle. At the door of the *houmfor* appeared l'Aumerié, the hounsi
789 possessed by Papa Chêbo. More than ever she resembled the loa, and less
783 than ever she resembled herself. In one hand she held a saber. Her bodily
793 movements were spasmodic, as though she was being forced to do things
[534] to which she was not accustomed. She moved slowly into the circle, her
eyes almost closed; she leaned backward, then twisted grotesquely around, jerked this way and that, buffeted by the loa. Suddenly she began to whirl.
[793] The houngan called "Tambouyé!" and the drummers beat a slow compli-
cated rhythm, a salute to Chêbo. The loa had really "entered" now. There was no mistaking the jerky, irresponsible movements of the hounsi's head and shoulders. She leaned backward as though about to fall, incredibly kept her balance, rolled forward as though she were going to plunge to the ground, and twisted herself upright once more. The saber passed close to the faces of the spectators, even scratched some of them and cut their clothing. Her movements had a definite, masculine character. Chêbo Profiel was a man.

782 She reached over to seize a chicken that was held out to her. Grasping
787 its legs with her free hand, she continued her spinning, twisting, lurching
734 dance. Then she cradled the chicken, rocking it back and forth until it
796 was in a hypnotic trance. She placed it on the ground before a tiny pile
769

of ground maize prepared by the laplace. The chicken, released, sat mo- 782
tionless, making no effort to escape. All watched attentively, the houngan 787
shaking his rattle and bell. Suddenly the chicken cocked its head and, 769
seeming to see the corn for the first time, reached out and pecked at it. 794
This was the loa receiving the sacrifice—a difficult conception if one thinks 796
of the chicken itself as the sacrifice. "Chébo," l'Autorité, snatched the chicken up, danced violently about, the loa in full possession of her body. With a swift movement of the saber, she cut the chicken's throat and caused the first drop of blood to fall into the hole. When the chicken stopped struggling, it was left there, head downward. L'Autorité took up a cock which was given her, cradled him, and set him before the ground maize. When he pecked at it, she picked him up and danced, around and around, jerking, lunging, never quite falling. She took his comb between her teeth, supporting his body gently with her hands, and spun around and around. Then she released him, cut his throat, and placed him in the hole with the chicken.

At the side of the hounfor, waiting, was a goat (called by the ritual name Dagwé). He had a fine silky white coat and a long beard. He was brought in to the place of sacrifice, and l'Autorité dropped to her knees to embrace his neck with her arms. She remained there a moment, her cheek against his, talking to him. Then she arose, a machete in hand instead of a saber, and began to pirouette while three men threw the goat on his side. Then she cut with the machete, and the goat's blood, too, began to run into the hole. For the first time her dance became unquestionably frenzied. She swung strong, full blows of the machete at the goat's neck, finally severing the head. From the hindquarters she cut a piece of red meat and placed it in her mouth.

At a signal from the houngan, three men carried the goat's body away to be dressed and cooked, and a woman came forward to wipe the blood from Papa Chébo's face.

The drums began again, a Dahomé dance, and the people relaxed. Many [535]
joined in the dancing while l'Autorité strutted about shaking hands and talking *langage*. She also danced, with gestures and movements wholly masculine. At one point she briefly advanced on another woman, making

The houngan and his houngénicon retired to the front room of the hut. 769
A new mat had been placed there for the houngénicon. She lay down on it, 793
and the houngan sat in a chair against the wall. This was the beginning 794
of the ceremony of calling *les morts en bas dleau* (the dead below the 796
water).

Meanwhile, before the hounfor, the laplace and a hounsi were building [346]

769 the *card*, a hogan-like structure made of bent saplings covered with cotton
793 cloth.

● 794 Rain had been threatening all evening, and now it began. Some people
796 crowded into the hut where the goat was being barbecued. Others came
[346) into the hut where the houngénicon lay; in the back room, with the pé, Chêbo, l'Autorité, strutted and shook hands with the visitors. The straw roof leaked a little, but no one minded very much. The houngan and his houngénicon, who had been under a strain, relaxed. The rain would mark the length of the intermission. Except for the sound of the rain and "Chêbo's" *langage*, there was no noise. No one spoke. Then the houngan,
769 his eyes closed, began to sing an Ibo song.

793 Ibo Lazile oh, éya!
796 Grand gout manqué tuyé moin!
539 A la yun an six mois m' sous la mer,
Grand gout manqué tuyé moin!

Ibo Lazile, oh, éya!
Hunger has not killed me!
One year and six months I have been under the sea,
Hunger has not killed me!

The others sang responsively:

Ibo Lazile, oh, Ibo!
Ibo grand gout pas tuyé'm, Ibo!

Ibo Lazile, oh, Ibo!
Ibo, hunger has not killed me, Ibo!

After a while the houngan called "Abobo!"—which was the signal to conclude. The rain was still coming down, and he called "Abobo!" for the rain to cease also. But it did not stop, and everyone laughed. He began another song, also Ibo:

Ianman Ibo lélé!
Ianman Ibo lélé!
Pilet pied'm mandé pardon,
Ça pardon wa fai pou moin?
Ça ou gainyan con ça? [Ex. 80]

Ianman Ibo lélé!
Ianman Ibo lélé!
Step on my foot and ask my pardon,
What will the pardon do for me?
What do you have [what are you doing] like that?

And the others came in, spiritedly:

Ianman, oh, un hunh!	Ianman, oh, un hunh!
Ianman, con ça'm dansé Ibo!	Ianman, like this I dance, Ibo!
Ianman, oh, un hunh!	Ianman, oh, un hunh!

While those in the front room were singing, l'Autorité, in the inner 769
room, was suddenly thrown about violently by her possession. She raced 794
into one wall of the hut, striking her head, flung herself back against the 796
opposite wall, kicking, trembling, calling out strange *langage*. She crashed 787
into the pé, upsetting the dishes, and then fell across the mat where the children were lying half asleep. One of them, a boy of about four, became hysterical. He knew the woman, but he had never seen her like this. His mother carried him to the front room, where she finally quieted his crying. L'Autorité, spent for the moment, lay across the mat. No one touched her. Later, when the singing was resumed, she got to her feet and made the rounds once more, shaking hands again and again. She was now smoking a pipe.

When the houngan heard the rain subsiding, he again called out [793]
"Abobo!" as though he were giving the order to cease, and everyone, himself included, laughed again. When it had definitely stopped, someone went out to shake the water from the canopy. The drums were brought out of their shelter, and although the ground was sticky with mud, the dancing was resumed. The houngan asked for a fast Nago dance, and the front room of the hut was once more emptied of everyone except the houngan and his houngénicon.

The laplace and his assistant went up the hill to put the finishing touches 769
to the *card*, the temporary structure in which the houngan was going to 793
receive the loa and the dead. From a small chest of chinaware, the houn- 794
génicon set a "table" for the loa on the ground where she sat. The sacrifice 796
had been for a single loa, Chébo; the rest of the service was for all the loa 787
served by the family. The houngan, sitting next to the houngénicon, [346]
sounded his rattle and spoke *langage*. He sang quietly, a song which only the houngénicon could hear, watching her intently. A large basket of dishes, bottles, and various other paraphernalia was brought by a hounsi. Candles were lighted and set on the ground. The houngan gave a signal, and the hounsi brought a large square of white cotton cloth, which they stretched tight over the houngénicon like a canopy. The candle flame and the silhouette of the houngénicon could be seen through the cloth, but the details of the service were not visible. Sometimes, the houngan, his bell and rattle in hand, would go under the cloth to assist in the calling of the loa. Then, without warning, things began to happen very rapidly.

One of the hounsi who sat before the door began to quiver and make strange noises in her throat: "Ka, ka, k-k-k-k-k-k-a!" Her body shook violently, and her head rolled on her shoulders. Almost simultaneously something began to happen under the cloth where the houngénicon was, and the members of the family crowded up to the *card* by the hounfor. The houngénicon lay stiffly, her eyes closed, the white cloth removed. The

769 houngan carried out the large round basket in which lay the bottles and
793 the pierre-loas. The hounsi gathered around it, ten of them, to carry it to
● 794 the *card*. In the bottles were *les morts en bas dleau* (the spirits of the dead
796 from below the water). Carrying the flags, three hounsi danced, singing,
787 up to the *card*. After them the laplace came, carrying in his left hand a plate of maize flour from which he made vèvès in the line of advance, simple marks symbolizing the crossroads. The drums were beating a special salute to the loa. The ten hounsi carrying the basket danced and sang. As [535] they moved up the hill, they rotated, so that the basket revolved like the hub of a wheel. Their progress was not smooth, however; they jerked forward and backward as they rotated. Arriving before the *card*, first one, then a second, was entered by her loa. They fell, jerked, and stumbled. This was all a very good omen. The houngan called "Abobo!" for them to resist such possession, and the hounsi all sat down on the ground. The houngan placed the basket inside the *card* and entered after it. He called for his little bell, which the laplace passed in to him. The laplace closed the flap down tight, from the outside, and placed the flags against it.

[539] Upon a signal given from within, the hounsi began a song:

La famille semblé,
Oh semblé nous!
La famille semblé,
Oh nous semblé pou nou pa'lé parole nous là!
La famille semblé!

The family gathers,
Oh, we gather!
The family gathers,
Oh, we gather to speak our words here!
The family gathers!

769 The laplace took his position, his back to the *card*, while inside, because
796 of the candle burning there, the houngan could be seen setting out the
787 contents of the basket. The candle went out, and in the *card* the little bell
794 began to tinkle. The singing stopped. The houngan was beginning to
[793] talk to the dead below the water. First he talked *langage*. Then his voice was heard through the constant sound of the tiny bell, supplicating Papa Loko to talk a little bit with his "children." A faint, tremulous voice, that of a tired old grandfather, was heard to answer. Papa Loko was stirring himself out of a long silence. He talked a long while to the houngan. Sometimes they both spoke at once. Faintly he was heard to say that he had come a long way to see his children, and that he was very tired. But as he talked his strength returned to him, and, asking the houngan to wait, he spoke directly to his "children," who sat, respectfully and awed,

Oh, a day will come when they will remember me here, *kèlè manyan!* 796
Oh, Damballa Wèdo *é, kèlè manyan.* 789
Oh, Ayida Wèdo *é, kèlè manyan!* 787
Oh, a day will come for you to remember me here, *kèlè manyan!* [539]

During the evening about twenty loa and ancestors came into the *caré* [776]
to talk. When the last had finished speaking the hills were already light,
and the service was over.

SERVICE FOR ÈZILIE FRÉDA AND ST. JACQUES MAJEUR

This service took place not in the open but under a tonnelle surrounded 796
by four walls, adjoining the hounfor of Alexis Stephan on the west fringes 776
of Port-au-Prince. Separate from the hounfor and dance court was a 346
shrine to the "dead" loa Gèdé Nimbo. The shrine was a small shed open
on one side. Within, lighted by flickering oil lamps, was a life-size effigy [532]
of Gèdé, a scarecrow-like figure dressed in the loa's traditional attire— [354]
black tail coat and trousers, and a tall opera hat. On the otherwise blank
face of the figure were smoked glasses with white rims.

The dancing was progressing under the supervision of the houngan's 796
adjutant, the laplace. He wandered among the drummers and dancers, [794]
encouraged the singing, and issued orders here and there. No one seemed
to take him very seriously. There was a good deal of joking, and the [522]
gathering seemed very much like an old-fashioned family reunion. There were perhaps a hundred dancers and spectators—friends, relatives, and devotees of Stephan's hounfor. Everyone was watching with affection an old woman who could not be restrained from dancing. She executed old classical steps and postures with a skill that called for running comment all around her. As each piece came to an end someone would step up to her and say something like: "Woy, Manman, mais ou passé mwè!" (Oh, Mother, you are better than me!). Then they would attempt to get her to sit down again, but she would only shake them off and urge the drummers to get going if they were not too tired.

Eventually, the houngan, Stephan, made a casual entrance through the [793]
door of his adjoining hounfor. He held the usual ritual rattle and bell in [534]
his hand, and sauntered around to chat with his friends.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, the dancing became more serious. 796
Soon, only the hounsi, the female servitors, were dancing. The drums 776
played a salute to Legba, the first loa to be called upon in a Vodoun serv- [794]
ice. For it is Legba who opens all gates and all highways, and who paves
the way for communication with other deities. Though he is not the great-
est of the loa, he is one of the most ancient. The houngan spilled water on [782]
the ground as a libation, and the dancing continued.

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Then a well-dressed young man entered, and the drummers swiftly changed to the salute reserved for guests of distinction. The hounsi sang, "Président passe là, l'ap monté au gouvernment!" and waved paper flags and kerchiefs. The young man was a distant relative of Stephan's; he also was a houngan.

[576]
After a while Stephan brought from his hounfor a second asson, or ritual rattle, and another small hand bell, both of which he handed to the young man. He was extending the courtesy of his hounfor, sharing his instruments of authority and religious power with his fellow houngan. Then followed an exhibition between the two houngans that was half duel and half ballet. They stood face to face, each of them holding the asson in one hand and the tiny bell in the other. Stephan was "testing" the young houngan for the edification of all present. Each tiny move made by Stephan was duplicated simultaneously by his guest, as though he were a mirrored reflection.

Every posture Stephan made was duplicated instantly by his guest. The assons and the bells were agitated constantly. The rattle in the young man's hand did precisely what Stephan's did. The two men looked into each other's eyes with intensity, as though this bound their movements together and unified them. When Stephan twisted to the left, the other houngan twisted to the right. Every contortion of the young man was an exact replica of Stephan's movements. The two assons rattled out the same rhythms and the same signals; so did the bells. The backdrop for this "test" was provided by the drummers. The faces of the two men broke into a sweat from the intense nervous effort. At last it came to an end. A woman came forward and wiped their faces with a colored kerchief. The "testing" ceremony was over. The visiting houngan had been proved.

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Stephan then made a ritual vèvè, or maize-flour ritual drawing on the ground. Afterward there was more singing and dancing by the hounsi. They sang several songs for Ezilie Fréda, the "pure" loa. And Alexis Stephan went into a trance. It was unexpected. The servitors had not prepared for it. In this emergency the visiting houngan took over. He seemed a little anxious. He was unfamiliar with the particular psychological factors at play in this particular hounfor. He was not certain of the character of Stephan's possession. But he took over grimly. The houngénicon, an older woman, stepped forward to help. While the young houngan wielded the asson and bell, the woman issued instructions. Stephan, his head hanging back, his eyes closed, was supported by two of the hounsi. Other servitors hurriedly brought out a white sheet and spread it on the ground. A chair and a table were set upon the sheet, and Stephan was placed in the chair, where he now sat with his head hanging limply on his chest.

Stephan had been mounted by Ezilie Fréda, the deity of whiteness and 796
purity. That was why he was protected from the earth by the white sheet 787
beneath him. While the drums continued to beat, the hounsi placed upon 793
the table a bottle of wine, a clean glass, and a white plate with boiled maize [794]
meal, topped by a whole egg. Then they held over Stephan—who had be- [796]
come, for the time being, Ezilie—a second white sheet. The possessed houngan began to bend forward and back with great rapidity, toward the surface of the table and back to an upright position, his arms hanging quietly downward. The hounsi fluttered the covering sheet in such a way that the spectators could not see what was going on beneath it. In less than a minute, Stephan's movements ceased. The sheet was removed. Stephan sat limply, talking *langage*. In the white dish only the broken shells of the egg and a small portion of the meal remained. Some of the wine was gone from the upright bottle. The glass still had a little wine in the bottom. Ezilie had accepted the sacrifice. Not once had Stephan's hands changed from their hanging position or approached the table. The eggshells themselves were clean, but a tiny trickle of liquid yolk ran from the corner of Stephan's mouth. The visiting houngan rattled his asson before Stephan, who arose wearily, with the help of the hounsi, and followed him through the door into the hounfor.

Again there was dancing, and a little while later Stephan emerged from the hounfor in a bizarre military costume of red velvet, wearing black glasses, a blue military cap with a red feather, and a sword. He was almost as weird as the effigy of Gèdé that stood outside. The houngan had now become St. Jacques Majeur, or Ogoun, the loa of war and the forge. His personality had undergone a dramatic change. Strictly speaking, Stephan was not in a trance as he had been a little earlier. He was in control of his movements, which were completely conscious, and yet he was certainly not in a "normal" state of mind. Previously Stephan had been in a state of possession; now, one might say, he was in a state of obsession. He had identified himself with St. Jacques. He strode and swaggered like St. Jacques. His bearing was regal, military, and awesome. His costume should have seemed funny, like similar costumes seen during Mardi Gras days, but instead it was unworldly and impressive.

He carried a rum bottle in his hand, and he moved through the gathering making people drink from it. Those who drank from the bottle were sharing with St. Jacques. Stephan poured more rum into an iron pot on the ground and set it afire. The hounsi kanzo, the servitors of the higher [794]
order who had been through the fire ordeal, came forward and washed their hands and arms with the burning rum, so that at times their whole arms were aflame, until they quickly snuffed the fire out. Some of the hounsi brought their children forward and washed their arms in the burn-

796 787 793 ing rum also, as a foretaste of the kanzo rites they might one day go through.

[794] There was dancing again for others besides the hounsi. The tension had passed. The ceremony was over, and the rest of the night was simply for pleasure.

GÈDÉ NIMBO, THE "DEAD" LOA

776 Gèdé Nimbo, also known as Baron Samedi, is one of the most powerful deities of the Haitian pantheon. He guards the cemetery and protects the graves, especially those of children. But Gèdé Nimbo is not simply another loa, he is a personification of death. Like death, he is given to whim. He is an intruder. He forces his way into services being held for other deities, behaves badly, and has to be wheedled to depart. He indulges in ribald humor when the mood strikes him, and the most solemn occasions are likely to be disturbed by his pranks. Gèdé Nimbo can be formidable when aroused, as he can be gentle and forbearing when it suits him.

Gèdé is always dressed in black, usually with a tail coat and top hat. He is always represented in this attire in the shrines where effigies of him are to be found. Elsie Clews Parsons, a number of years ago, reported this Haitian description of Gèdé:

> He is a *grande diable*. He makes all kinds of motions to make you laugh, but you must not laugh at him, for if you do he makes you "stop laughing" . . . Anything you touch, he takes and never returns, and you have to give him more and more. He smokes cigarettes, not cigars. He wears a coat and a hat, and carries a stick. He can make himself short or . . . as tall as a mast.[8]

The kind of motions Gèdé makes would in certain other cultures be regarded as obscenities. In Haiti they are merely public violations of social restraints and taboos, things no Haitian would think of doing in public view. But Gèdé, the loa of the graveyard, has special prerogatives. He does not fear criticism. He flouts propriety at will, he embarrasses, provokes, and insults with impunity.

776 787 776 At a Nago ceremony which I witnessed near Port-au-Prince, the stronghold of the Gèdé cult, Gèdé Nimbo entered with such gusto that he virtually made a shambles of the service. The first person to be mounted by the loa was the laplace, the houngan's understudy. He stiffened, twisted, jerked, and thrashed about. As the more violent phase of his possession wore off, he began to make lascivious loin movements, as though copulating with the center post. Afterward, he moved about, shaking hands and greeting various persons with insulting remarks calculated to make others laugh at the indignities. Stopping before a distinguished-looking spectator, Gèdé made a few loin movements in his direction. Grasping another man by the hands, he greeted him vigorously and inquired whether it was

[8] [Parsons, Spirit Cult in Hayti. Cf. p. 351 (Gédé-[illegible])]

remembers many of the details. But during the administration of President 000
Louis Borno (1922–1930) there was a reënactment of the original march. 776
There suddenly appeared in the streets of Port-au-Prince a crowd of Gèdé 788
mystères—houngans "possessed" by Gèdé Nimbo and attired in Gèdé 643
dress: tall black hats, long black tail coats, smoked glasses, black skirts 175
over their black trousers. They carried flags, waved polka-dot kerchiefs, shook their ceremonial rattles, and paused sometimes to wipe the perspiration from one another's faces. They became the nucleus of a huge, noisy crowd moving up the hill toward the palace. Market women followed instead of going home; street gamins screamed and raced among them. Before they had arrived at the palace grounds they had taken on the semblance of a huge Mardi Gras band. They swerved through the gates of the palace grounds and along the drive, right to the steps of the palace itself. The guards, taken by surprise, waited helplessly for their officers to arrive.

At the palace door, the houngans demanded money from the president. Borno was in a dilemma. He was reputed to be sympathetic to Vodoun ritual but was only surreptitiously so. He feared the houngans, and he feared public opinion. What would the upper class of Port-au-Prince think, the Latin-culture Haitians? With Gèdé's worst manners, the Gèdé mystères cavorted on the palace steps. Finally Borno gave in. He sent the money out to them, and then the crowd of Gèdés marched out of the palace grounds, waving their flags and shaking their rattles.

SERVICE FOR THE HOUNSI BOSSALE

This ritual of calling the loa to speak through the mouth of the Vodoun 346
priest took place in the Bolosse section of Port-au-Prince. The hounfor was 796
situated in a congested slum area of the city, but the grounds around it 987
were spacious. The hounfor itself was small and unpretentious, and except for the adjoining tonnelle would easily have been mistaken for another small wooden house. The houngan was a heavy-set man with a 793
black mustache. Quick to laugh and easy in his movements, he neverthe- 794
less commanded solemn respect from the hounsi and the other partici- 796
pants. His soft-spoken voice expressed assurance and authority. 987

There were a number of possessions in the course of the dancing, all more or less routine. Each time a possession occurred, the houngan came forward with his asson and bell, gave a pitcher of water and a candle to the possessed devotee, and conducted her through a ritual at the foot of the center post.

Later, one of the hounsi came and sat at the houngan's feet. She was not possessed but obviously was in a state of high tension. Other servitors brought from the hounfor a wooden washtub and set it on the ground

793 before the houngan. Staring into the tub, he shook his asson and called
794 upon a certain loa to enter. Then he placed a lighted candle upright in the
796 tub and watched it for a moment. The flame was suddenly snuffed out.
787 The houngan looked concerned. He removed the candle and called for another one. When he placed the new candle in the tub it remained burning. The houngan smiled. The loa had agreed to enter. The houngan and his chief assistant placed the tub upon the head of the waiting hounsi. She trembled violently as though she had received a shock, then leaped to her feet. The loa had mounted her and presumably was sitting in the tub on her head. She began to stagger back and forth across the dance court, while the drums beat a salute. The tub tottered dangerously but did not fall. The possessed hounsi then began to whirl. She stopped, and the tub continued to spin for a few seconds on her head. She twirled again in the opposite direction. Each time she stopped she waited for the tub to stop spinning. The twirling motion was accompanied by a constant jerking and lurching, as though she were about to lose her balance, but she never stumbled or fell. After perhaps five minutes of this violent "riding" by the loa, the houngan approached her with his asson and conducted her into the hounfor, the tub still on her head. Inside the hounfor he removed the tub, sent the loa away, and left the hounsi to rest.

[346] There was more dancing, and after a while the service was transferred to a small temporary cloth-covered structure resembling an American Indian hogan. The hounsi bossale—the servitors whose loa had not been "tamed" or conditioned—lay before the structure on their faces, side by side. There were twelve of them. The other hounsi covered them completely with white sheets. The houngan entered the hogan-like structure (the *card*) with a candle and a bell. He tinkled his bell and began to call upon the loa to speak to the hounsi bossale. Through his mouth, first one spirit and then another made comments. The hounsi under the sheets were tensely quiet, until one of them began to jerk and scream. Several others, as though responding to a trigger, joined in the screaming. Older women came to quiet them. The hysterical reaction of the hounsi bossale was regarded as simply a reflection of their beginners' status. Their loa had not yet been controlled. The ritual continued until the early hours of the morning, the loa and ancient ancestors coming in to speak, one after another.

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THE FIRST YAMS AND THE FIRST RICE

[796] Each year, when the yams are harvested there is a great festival known as
[262] the *mangé yam*. Of all things grown in Haiti, the yam is perhaps the most significant. It is the most vital of all staples, and it is traditional. The yam

776 to "eat" people; that is, to destroy them. To do this he employs such
753 means as disease, insanity, and destruction of crops. If a man serves
828 Pinga Maza well, the loa protects him in return; but for those who anger
731 him, Pinga is a menacing and vengeful creature. People often say,
"Pinga, c'est djab" (Pinga is a devil).

346 The Pinga hounfor in Port-au-Prince is called the *Société de la Belle
353 Jenne Fleur*. Its peristyle is simple and is hardly distinguishable from
794 those of other small hounfors. Around the base of the center pole is
778 a three-foot-high wall of masonry, decorated with simple cult symbols.
The outer room of the hounfor proper also resembles many another. The familiar pot têtes containing loa stand on a wooden altar, and there are Catholic lithographs on the walls. But the inner room belongs exclusively to Pinga Maza. Here are all the accoutrements and objects sacred to the deity. Everything is red. Pinga's clothing and kerchiefs are red. On the walls are painted esoteric designs—hands, skulls, and crosses—all in red. The bottles, magic bundles, and govis on the altar are decorated with red cloth, ribbons, or paint. In the middle of the earthen floor is embedded a heavy wooden cross. On each end of the crossbeam hangs a large calabash resembling a bulbous hand. And on top of the upright is affixed a human skull. The total impression of this hounfor is that of a bizarre aberration, calculated to intimidate and terrify. The houngan himself is relatively young, literate, and city wise. His personality is smooth and sharp, and he lacks the air of sincerity and easy simplicity which most often characterizes the houngan of the mountains.

353 In this inner room, before the skull and the cross, there took place a
754 small service for a client, to determine what kind of magic was needed
755 to fend off malevolent actions of an enemy. On the day of the divining
session, there hung from the rafters of the tonnelle a long rope, which extended into a deep hole in the earth near the door. Hanging on the rope, down inside the hole, were two gray dolls tightly bound together. Hanging still farther down were a knife, a fork, and other, unidentifiable objects. This cluster of magic paraphernalia was an *expédition* at work; it was an elaborate pouin, which was working against an enemy who lived far away.

793 Before entering the hounfor, the houngan took a long rope whip
755 from the wall and cracked it seven times before the door. This process,
known as *frete cache*, was to "wake up" the loa within. The houngan then entered, followed by the client who was seeking help. They paused briefly in the outer room, where the houngan took up his ason and bell and made a small vèvè on the ground. He spoke briefly in *langage* and then passed on through the door to the inner room. There the

The importance of water in Vodoun has a fundamentally West African character. Among the Yoruba and the Ashanti and in Dahomey, for example, water rites are a significant aspect of religious ritual. Herskovits notes the frequency of religious pilgrimages to streams in West Africa. 171 771 823 796 778

In one instance, at Abeokuta, a bedecked procession of worshipers left a shrine atop a high hill, followed a long path to the riverside over two miles away, and returned before the ceremonies could be carried out at the shrine of the god. On one occasion, in Dahomey, the bed of the sacred stream run dry was "filled" from nearby wells so that this water could be ritually redrawn for use in an especially important ceremony. Among the Ashanti, pilgrimages to Lake Bosumtwe and other sacred bodies of water regularly occur. And it is on such occasions that the spirit of the river or lake or sea manifests itself, by "entering the head" of the devotee and causing him to fling himself, possibly possessed, into the water.[8A]

So it is also in Haiti, where possession at the river's edge may cause the devotee to leap into the river. At Saut d'Eau, possessed persons plunge into the waterfall without regard for their safety, being in the care of the loa who have mounted them. 823 787 778

Into this water complex the Christian rite of baptism has been easily absorbed, providing merely a new act of veneration for water and its properties. In the Haitian mind baptism is not far removed from the *lavé tête* ritual, the washing of the head, or the *refraichi tête*, the "refreshing" of the head, both of which are acts in propitiation of the loa.[9A] So related is the baptismal concept in the Haitian mind, that the term "baptize" is used to describe the lavé tête; it is said that the loa is being "baptized." So also are drums "baptized," not to mention yams, and even the hounfor itself. 177 797 823 778 782 795 851

MARRIAGE TO A LOA

Although the term *hounsi* (spirit wife, or wife of the spirit) is applied to a large class of servitors of the Vodoun temple, only a small number of servitors ever pass through rites which give them a husband-wife or wife-husband relationship with a loa. Reasons for these mystic marriages vary, but usually the rituals take place upon the prescription of a cult priest who interprets the will of the deities concerned. Most of the mystic marriages of which I have heard have taken place in the general area of Port-au-Prince and the Cul-de-Sac Plain. In some other areas of Haiti it appears that no such rites have taken place locally within the memory of the older inhabitants. One aged man living near Belladère declared: "It [marriage to a loa] is impossible. People serve loa, they do not marry them. A man does not marry his horse. A loa [588] [794] ●

[8A] [Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, p. 233. Cf p. 351, Category 116. --Analyst]

[9A] [It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain Negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in familiar form. Cf p. 861, Category 116. -- Analyst]

[P. 75]

6. Songs of the Peristyle

The songs that are sung in the peristyle are virtually numberless and 533
have a wide range of themes. In general, they are in the spirit of sup- 782
plication or placation. Preponderantly they relate in some way to the 794
deities. A loa may be described, invoked, or called upon to perform 776
certain deeds. He may be cajoled, joked with, and even criticized. But it is all a family affair. The servitors and the *fidèles* are the loa's "children," his "horses," his "leaves in the woods." The loa, the spirits of [769]
the dead, and the living members of the cult are all members of the same "nation." Whether supplication or admonition, the songs of the peristyle and the hounfor all have an intimate character. The affairs of the loa are the affairs of the société. What concerns one individual concerns all.

The themes of the songs have to do with the drama of the cult ritual, 533
the coming and going of the deities, sickness and death, the welfare 794
of the dead, and the behavior of the living. 782
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The cult service is a dramatic presentation which synchronizes and brings into sharp focus the heritage of religious and folk beliefs. The songs describe and evaluate what is going on. Sometimes they are cryptic and tangent, but to those participating and those watching they are clues. As the action is usually related and progressive, so are the songs. Each song has its own place and its own meaning. One song is not readily interchangeable with another. Each service has its appropriate music. So does each developing phase of the hounfor ritual.

Some of the songs are addressed to the loa; others seem to be the words of the loa themselves. In many of the songs there is an implicit dialogue between one or more loa and the singers. This dialogue is not rendered in a form which is immediately understandable to a stranger. There is a constantly shifting point of view, so that sometimes the words are third-person comments about the loa or the situation,

533 sometimes they are the words of the deity, sometimes words addressed
794 to the deity. The name of the loa may appear anywhere in the song, as
796 both an invocational word and a rhythmic device, with the result that
776 unless one is aware of the song structure he may lose the sense and intent of the words. In these two lines, for example:

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Master Agwé comes from the sea,
My cannon is loaded.

796 The first line describes what happens, from the standpoint of a third person; the second line is a statement by the loa Agwé. Or, take this single line:

Marie Louise oh, we are mixed up!

Here Marie Louise seems to be the person addressed, but in fact it is Marie Louise who is talking. Again:

I don't see my blood, Master Ogoun!

It is not Ogoun who is addressed; the words are his own.

As in nonreligious songs, there is a pattern stanza which is repeated over and over again. As the song goes on, there may be variations for interest and certain embellishments, but by and large the form remains constant. In religious singing there are relatively few examples of songs which progress from one idea to another. When the theme has been stated, that is the song.

533 One of the preliminary songs in many ritual services is a greeting to
539 the men and women of the société who are present. It is an *ochan*, or
794 salute of welcome, and comes before the loa themselves are addressed:

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Messieurs-dames bonsoir!	Gentlemen and ladies, good evening!
M'apé mandé nou!	I ask you!
Messieurs-dames bonsoir!	Gentlemen and ladies, good evening!
M'apé mandé nou	I ask you
Qui gens nous yé! [Ex. 42]	What people are we?

The answer to the question is implicit, for they are the people of the société, members of the Arada "nation" or Anago "nation," as the case may be.

782 In almost any service of the Dahomey "nation" the first supplicatory
796 song is addressed to Legba, the keeper of the gate, the guardian of the
533 crossroads, and the "go-between" who intercedes with other loa in the
794 affairs of men. The first appeal to Legba is to open the gate, over which he is master, so that the voices of supplication may be heard and understood. The open gate also provides access for other loa to the service.

Attibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ago! 782
Ou wè Attibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ouvri bayè! 776
M'apè rentré quand ma tourné, 533
Ma salut loa yo! 539
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Attibon Legba, open the gate for me, *ago!*
You see, Attibon Legba, open the gate for me, open the gate!
I will enter when I return,
I salute the loa!

After this appeal, or sometimes while it is being sung, the houngan spills a little water on the earth at the base of the po'teau mitan. It is an inducement for the loa to "enter," for the loa reside "below the water" and their passage into the hounfor is made easier by water. The houngan may spill his water in a long path from the entrance of the peristyle to the po'teau mitan, or extend his pitcher invitingly to the four points of the compass. Then, perhaps, another song is sung to Legba: [793] [823] [778]

Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Ou même qui porté drapeau,
C'est ou même ki paré soleil pou' loa yo!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
You who carry the flag,
It is you who shade the loa from the sun!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

As the ritual gets under way, there may be a general song of welcome to all the loa of the cult, such as this one: 533 539 531 776 794

Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Oh bonjou' oh bonjou' loa moin! [Ex. 43]

Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Oh, good day, oh, good day my loa!

When the service is well in progress, the songs may describe the qualities of the deities—their character, behavior and needs. If it is Balindjo, for example, the song may advertise that persons with this loa in their heads are immune to poison:

Ogoun Balindjo, Oh Ogoun ohé!	Ogoun Balindjo, Oh, Ogoun, ohé!

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Ogoun Balindjo,	Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh Ogoun oh!	Oh, Ogoun, oh!
C'est pas mangé rangé	There is no poisoned food
Pral tuyé chwal moin! [Ex. 44]	That will kill my horse!

Ogoun Fai, known also by the Christian name St. Jacques, is the deity of war, and this song describes his courage and valor:

St. Jacques Majeur a voyé dit'm ga'çon déjà!
St. Jacques oh voyé dit'm ga'çon déjà!
St. Jacques Majeur a voyé dit'm ga'çon la-gué!
St. Jacques oh voyé dit'm ga'çon la-gué! [Ex. 45]

Major St. Jacques sent to tell me he is already a man!
St. Jacques, oh, sent to tell me he is already a man!
Major St. Jacques sent to tell me he is a man of war!
St. Jacques, oh, sent to tell me he is a man of war!

Should the service be to the loa Damballa Wèdo, symbolized as a rainbow and a great serpent, this song might be sung, commenting that he cannot be drowned in the water:

Papa Damballa ou c'est couleuvre oh!
Pouq'ou pas néyé?
Pouq'ou pas néyé?
Damballa pouq'ou pas néyé nan dleau? [Ex. 46]

Papa Damballa you are a snake, oh!
Why don't you drown?
Why don't you drown?
Damballa, why don't you drown in the water?

[778] [823] [532] [231]

Damballa, the rainbow, is in fact the source of the water that bubbles from the earth in springs. He is a patron of the spring, and there he often lives in the form of a water snake. In many a houmfor where Damballa is specially revered there is a *bassin*, or pool, dedicated to him. On the wall behind the pool there is usually a painting of Damballa and Ayida, depicted as great serpents, sometimes with a feathered headdress. The pool is kept filled with fresh water from the spring, and here one or more small snakes—symbols of Damballa and Ayida—reside:

Ala loa marché nan dleau
C'est Damballa!
Ala loa marché nan dleau
C'est Damballa!
Papa Damballa c'est oba à dleau!
Papa Damballa c'est oba'à dleau!

There is a loa who lives in the water,
It is Damballa!

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There is a loa who lives in the water,
It is Damballa!
Papa Damballa is the spring!
Papa Damballa is the spring!

Ayida Wèdo, another aspect of Damballa, is also known as a snake and a rainbow. A song describing Ayida's attributes goes:

Ayida c'est arc-en-ciel oh!	Ayida is a rainbow, oh!
Ou ap' vin' fai couleuvre!	You will come in like a snake!
Ayida c'est arc-en-ciel!	Ayida is a rainbow!
Pas wè m'ap fai couleuvre? [Ex. 47]	Don't you see I come in as a snake?

Agwé Woyo, one of the major deities of the sea, is believed to be responsible for thunder over the ocean, which is described as the sound of his cannon shooting:

Mait' Agwé so'ti nan la mer,
Canon'm chargé-é!
Mait' Agwé so'ti nan la mer,
Canon'm chargé!
Mait' Agwé so'ti nan la mer,
Canon'm chargé oh!
Canon'm chargé pou'm tiré Mait' A'Woyo! [Ex. 48]

Master Agwé comes from the sea,
My cannon is loaded!
Master Agwé comes from the sea,
My cannon is loaded!
Master Agwé comes from the sea,
My cannon is loaded, oh!
My cannon is loaded to fire, Master Agwé Woyo!

The loa Kitta, or Simbi Kitta, of the *Guinée* pantheon is one of the water deities. He is described as coming out of the water dripping wet:

Kitta oh so'ti nan d'leau li tout mouillé!
Oh Kitta oh so'ti nan d'leau li tout mouillé!
Oh Kitta so'ti nan d'leau li tout mouillé!
Oh nan point houngan passé Bondieu nan pays-yà! [Ex. 37]

Kitta, oh, comes out of the water, he is all wet!
Oh, Kitta, oh, comes out of the water, he is all wet!
Oh, Kitta comes out of the water, he is all wet!
Oh, there is no houngan in this country greater than God!

Tijean Pétro of the Pétro "nation" is small, and agile even though he has only one foot. (Some people say that Tijean Petro has no feet at all.) This somewhat malevolent deity hides in the leaves of the coconut palm, and from there he sometimes preys on passers-by, particularly children. Persons mounted by Tijean Pétro may move about as though they have no feet and climb into the tallest palm tree. [787]

2: Courlander 9-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 HaRl SV3

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they have no feet and climb into the nearest palm tree. This song comments on Tijean's ability to climb with his single foot. (Haitians do not "shinny" up trees, but walk up, bracing the soles of the feet against the trunk.)

Tijean ou pas gainyain pieds,	Tijean, you have no feet,
Tijean ou pas gainyain pieds,	Tijean, you have no feet,
Comment ou fai monté cocoyé?	How do you climb the coconut tree?
Lans bayè ou Legba, Jean Pétro,	By using Legba's gate, Jean Pétro,
Lans bayè oui!	By using the gate!

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When the loa begin to arrive in the hounfor to participate in the ceremonies, there is usually a song taking note of their coming. Sometimes the words describing the action are the deity's own account of what is happening, as in this song to the loa Sobo:

C'est passé m'ap passé lá!
C'est passé ma passé lá!
É hounsi bossale é yo lenmain nom moin!
Yo lenmain nom moin yo lenmain nom moin!
Yo rélé hounsi kanzo!
Yo rélé Dahomein!
Yo rélé moin! [Ex. 50]

I am passing through, I am passing through!
I am passing, I am passing here!
É, the hounsi bossale call my name!
They are calling for me, they are calling for me!
The hounsi kanzo are calling!
Dahomey is calling!
They are calling me!

In another rite one might hear this song about the arrival of the deity Simbi, from the point of view of the servitors rather than of the loa:

Simbi Kita vini wè moin, oh!
Oh Simbi ou vini wè moin lá, oh saints yé! [Ex. 51]

Simbi Kita comes to see me, oh!
Oh, Simbi will come to see me here, oh saints!

When the deity Boulicha Nago comes in, there is a call for the drums to be played:

Nago 'rivé-é,	Nago arrives,
Boulicha Nago 'rivé-é!	Boulicha Nago arrived!
Nago 'rivé-é,	Nago arrives,
Boulicha Nago 'rivé-é!	Boulicha Nago arrived!
Li lè li temps bats lá!	It is time, beat the drums!
Li lè li temps bats lá!	It is time, beat the drums!
Nago 'rivé jodi-á oh enhé! [Ex. 52]	Nago comes today, oh, enhé!

Sobo, too, demands his drums as he arrives, as well as all the other paraphernalia for his ritual:

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Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Sobo mandé houtoi 'Llada!	Sobo asks for his Allada houtoi!
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Sobo mandé tambou' Rada!	Sobo asks for his Arada drums!
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Coté yo coté yo?	Where are they, where are they?
Sobo mandé pouin Allada!	Sobo asks for his Allada magic!
Coté yo coté yo? [Ex. 53]	Where are they, where are they?

When more than one loa comes into the service at the same time there is confusion. Each loa is supposed to await his turn, so that the ritual and the dance may be conducted in an orderly way. Sometimes, however, two or more deities come in at once, throwing the orderly process out of gear. This song takes note of the simultaneous arrival of the loa Adja, Loko, Sobo, Sodje, and others.

Adja nou mêlé, oh Adja oh!
Adja nou mêlé!
Nou mêlé Papa Loko, nou mêlé jodi-a!

Adja nou mêlé, oh Adja oh!
Adja nou mêlé!
Nou mêlé Sodje assez nou mêlé jodi-a!

Adja nou mêlé, oh Adja oh!
Adja nou mêlé!
Nou mêlé kilé ouété Nèg' Sobo nou mêlé jodi-a! [Ex. 54]

Adja we are mixed, oh, Adja, oh!
Adja we are mixed!
We are mixed Papa Loko, we are mixed up today!

Adja we are mixed, oh, Adja, oh!
Adja we are mixed!
We are mixed Sodje, enough, we are mixed up today!

Adja we are mixed, oh, Adja, oh!
Adja we are mixed!
We are mixed all the time, Nèg' Sobo, we are mixed up today!

When the loa come in en masse this way, some are asked to retire so that the service can proceed smoothly. In a similar instance, the deity Marie Louise is willing to withdraw from the scene but demands that a present or sacrifice be given to her first. [782]

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Marie Louise oh nou mêlé!	Marie Louise, oh, we are mixed up!
Marie Louise oh nou mêlé!	Marie Louise, oh, we are mixed up!
Cadô ça ou ba moin pou'm allé?	Where is my gift so that I can go?

Often, when it is time to leave the service, the deity announces through the medium of the song that he has other affairs to attend to elsewhere. Ogoun Achadé, for example, makes a swift departure:

Ogoun volé!	Ogoun flies!
Anago!	Anago!
Ogoun volé Achadé!	Ogoun flies Achadé!
Anago Papa! [Ex. 55]	Anago Papa!

As the deity Général Brisé departs, he tells his servitors that he is "going to God," and that he turns responsibility for their affairs over to them:

Général Brisé payo ya nan main oh!
Agoé! Agoé-é!
Général Brisé payo ya nan main oh!
Payo ya nan main
M'pral Bondieu djab oh! [Ex. 56]

General Brisé, the country is in your hands, oh!
Agoé! Agoé-é!
General Brisé, the country is in your hands, oh!
The country is in your hands,
I am going to God, oh!

The loa Bumba, in reply to a query, declares that he must go because he has work to do in his fields:

Bumba qui coté prallé?	Bumba, where are you going?
Bumba qui coté prallé?	Bumba, where are you going?
Bumba qui coté prallé?	Bumba, where are you going?
Bumba qui coté prallé?	Bumba, where are you going?
M'planté manga!	I am planting mangos!
Planté patate!	Planting potatoes!
Planté jouroumou!	Planting pumpkins!
Planté banane!	Planting plantains!
Wallo Bumba qui coté prallé? [Ex. 57]	Wallo Bumba, where are you going?

The deities Mait' Bois and Mait' Dleau declare as they depart that they are on their way to Africa, and leave the impression that things are pretty nice over there:

Mait' Dleau qui so'ti nans dleau!	Mait' Dleau who comes out of the water!
Mait' Bois qui so'ti nans bois!	Mait' Bois who comes out of the woods!
Nan Guinée plaisi-à belle oh!	In Africa pleasure is beautiful, oh!
A n'allé wè yo! [Ex. 58]	We are going to see!

As the loa Mambo Ayida of the Guinée pantheon leaves the hounfor to return to Africa, her "children" ask her not to stay there too long. And they ask her to bring back to Haiti with her some good magic for use in the hounfor: 533 537 776 794 796

Mambo Ayida é!
Pral nan Guinée-à, pinga ou rété à m'tendé!
Si ou jwinn bon ouanga wa po'té!
Si ou jwinn bon baton wa po'té! [Ex. 59]

Mambo Ayida é!
Go to Africa, take care not to stay, I am waiting!
If you find a good ouanga, bring it!
If you find a good baton, bring it!

Giving food to the loa is a focal point in religious rituals. Many songs describe the sacrifice, signify that the loa are waiting for their food, or otherwise dramatize this significant activity. In the following song the deity Damballa asks for the goat with which he is to be fed. 533 537 776 779 781 782

Damballa Wèdo oh c'est sang-é!
Damballa mandé tête cabrit,
C'est sang li mandé!
Damballa Wèdo oh c'est sang-é!
Damballa mandé tête cabrit,
C'est sang li mandé!
Damballa Wèdo oh c'est sang li mandé!
Oh assez! [Ex. 60]

Damballa Wèdo, oh, it is blood é!
Damballa asks for the head of the goat,
It is blood he asks for!
Damballa Wèdo, oh, it is blood é!
Damballa asks for the head of the goat,
It is blood he asks for!
Damballa Wèdo, oh, it is blood he asks for!
Oh, enough!

For Ogoun they sometimes sing:

Papa Ogoun qui gain' yun mangé
Tout' moune pas mangé li!
Ehhé enhé, ehé! [Ex. 61]

It is Papa Ogoun who has a feast,
Not everyone may eat it!
Ehhé enhé, ehé!

But sometimes Ogoun is dissatisfied that there is no feast ready for him, and he complains.

533 Ogoun é oh moin blessé!	Ogoun *é*, oh, I am hurt!
539 Ogoun é oh moin blessé!	Ogoun *é*, oh, I am hurt!
776 A pas m'blessé Ferei,	Now I am hurt, Ferei,
M'pas wè sang moin!	I don't see my blood!
782 M'pas wè sang'm Maît Ogoun,	I don't see my blood, Master Ogoun,
● 794 Moin pas wè sang moin!	I don't see my blood!
796 M'pas wè sang'm Badagry,	I don't see my blood, Badagry
Moin pas wè sang moin là! [Ex. 62]	I don't see my blood here!

The loa Moundongue, like Damballa, likes goat meat, and it can be cooked in two ways:

Yè yè yè!
Moundongue oh!
Oh Moundongue oh yè yè yè!
Moundongue mangé cabrit bouilli,
Moundongue mangé cabrit boucané! [Ex. 63]

Yè yè yè!
Moundongue, oh!
Oh, Moundongue, oh, yè yè yè!
Moundongue eats boiled goat,
Moundongue eats roasted goat!

Or again, the servitors may sing:

Cote pasé na ba'ou mangé, oh Ti Moundongue nà!
Cote pasé na ba'ou mangé, Moundongue nà! [Ex. 64]

Wherever you are, we give you food, oh, Ti Moundongue there!
Wherever you are, we give you food, Moundongue there!

[799] [787] [781] The loa Adja also has animal sacrifices and special dishes for his mangé, but sometimes he—and the "horses" he mounts—will eat broken glass:

Oh Adja mangé bounda dèmijan!
Adja vieu' vieu'!
Adja mangé bounda dèmijan!
Adja vieu' vieu'! [Ex. 65]

Oh, Adja eats the bottom of a bottle!
Adja, old one, old one!
Adja eats the bottom of a bottle!
Adja, old one, old one!

For the loa Ianman Ibo the proper sacrifice is a rooster, and the deity declares:

Nanchon Ibo m'la mangé gros coq oh nanchon Ibo!
Nanchon Ibo m'la mangé gros coq!
Nanchon Ibo m'la mangé gros coq oh nanchon Ibo!
Wailo wailo wailo! [Ex. 66]

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Ibo nation, I am going to eat a large cock, oh, Ibo nation! 776
Ibo nation, I am going to eat a large cock! 784
Ibo nation, I am going to eat a large cock, oh, Ibo nation! 796
Waille waille waille! [782]

The Ibo service is often a strictly family affair rather than a broad community ritual. The family replies to the Ibo loa in the following song. [184]

La famille vin' payé sang,	The family comes to pay blood,
Vin' payé sang!	Comes to pay blood!
La famille vin' payé sang,	The family comes to pay blood,
Ibo Latile volonté! [Ex. 41]	It is Ibo Latile's wish!

The loa Nago frankly tells the people that if they want to come to his house (his shrine, or the hounfor) they will have to pay something for the privilege:

Si nou wè coté'm demeuré,	If you see where I live,
Si nou wè coté'm demeuré,	If you see where I live,
Fau'm payé bonbon pou' ça!	You have to give cookies for that!
Anago Nago!	Anago Nago!
Vin' wè coté'm demeuré! [Ex. 67]	Come see where I live!

The "dead" spirit Gèdé Nimbo, the guardian or master of the cemetery, 776 who often engages in bizarre activities which poke fun at the codes of 782- social behavior, is sometimes regarded as a special protector of children. 796 Precisely because he is overlord of all that has to do with the grave, 794: his good will is sought, particularly in behalf of the young; and in many services of the Nago rites his protection is bought by money gifts:

Gèdé main la'gent, [539]
M'apé ba ou la'gent la'gent, [533]
M'apé ba ou la'gent pou' ga'dé zenfants la yo!
M'apé ba ou la'gent pou' ga'dé zenfants la yo!

Gèdé, take the money,
I will give you money, money,
I will give you money to guard the children!
I will give you money to guard the children!

In the course of the ceremonies when, from time to time, the honored 787 loa of the occasion enters into the head of one of the servitors, the 798 houngan will place in the hands of the mounted person a lighted candle 794 and a pitcher of water. 776 The possessed servitor approaches the sacred center post and spills a little water on the ground for the deity. After certain other rituals, the houngan, or one of his assistants, conducts the mounted "horse" into the hounfor to the altar. In the following song, [533] as the possession comes on, there is a call for a lighted candle. [539]

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Simbi nan wè oh!
Simbi djab nan wè!
Oh Simbi nan wè oh!
Simbi nan wè oh!
Simbi wa limé chandelle pou' clairé moin! [Ex. 68]

Simbi doesn't see, oh!
Stern Simbi doesn't see!
Oh, Simbi doesn't see, oh!
Simbi doesn't see, oh!
Simbi [says] you will light the candle so I can see!

Some of the songs refer to the dancing of the loa who enter the bodies of the servitors. The deity Loko asks for his hounsi, through whom he will dance:

Coté pitits moin yo,
Mainnain'm nan hounfor, m'ap djaillé!
Na pou Loko,
Coté pitits moin yo! [Ex. 69]

Where are my children,
Take me into the hounfor, I will *djaillé*!
Now, Loko,
Where are my children!

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Another deity, who is not expressly named, tells his "leaves in the woods"—that is, his hounsi—that he has danced since he was a child:

Fé nan bois hélé moin!	Leaves in the woods call me!
Oh dépi'm piti m'ap dansé!	Oh, since I was small I have danced!
Fé nan bois lé-é!	Leaves in the woods *lé-é*!
Fé nan bois hélé moin oh!	Leaves in the woods call me, oh!
Oh fé nan bois hélé moin oh!	Oh, leaves in the woods call me, oh!
Dépi'm piti m'ap dansé!	Since I was small I have danced!
Fé nan bois hélé moin! [Ex. 70]	Leaves in the woods call me!

In the following song the loa Macaya Bumba is called upon by the hounsi to hurry up and get on with his dancing.

Macaya Bumba Bumba!	Macaya Bumba Bumba!
Lévé dansé!	Get up and dance!
Macaya Bumba!	Macaya Bumba!
Bumba mon cher vini dansé! [Ex. 71]	Bumba my dear, come and dance!

A song for the deity Ianman in the course of the Ibo dancing and ritual goes:

Ibo lélé!
Ibo lélé!
Nanchon Ibo ça *ou* gainyain nan ça Ibo lélé!

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Ianman con ça, con ça!
Ianman con ça'm dansé Ibo!
Ianman con ça, con ça!
Ianman con ça'm dansé Ibo!
Ianman con ça, con ça!
Ianman é-wa é-wa é-wa! [Ex. 72]

Ibo *lélé!*
Ibo *lélé!*
Ibo Nation, what are you doing there, Ibo *lélé?*
Ianman, like that, like that!
Ianman, like that I dance the Ibo!
Ianman, like that, like that!
Ianman, like that I dance the Ibo!
Ianman, like that, like that!
Ianman *é-wa é-wa é-wa!*

Another song containing the same zestful appreciation of dancing is for the loa Kitta. The words "my mother isn't dead" and "my father isn't dead" are simply expressions of good fortune and happiness which embellish the command to do the Kitta steps:

Ai ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!
Kitta Congo oh ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!

Manman pas mouri ba'm pas Kitta!
Kitta Congo oh ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!

M'dit piti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!
Kitta Congo oh ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta!

Papa pas mouri ba'm pas Kitta!
Kitta Congo oh ti ga'çon ba'm pas Kitta! [Ex. 73]

Ai, little man, give me the Kitta steps!
Kitta Congo, oh, little man, give me the Kitta steps!

My mother is not dead, give me the Kitta steps!
Kitta Congo, oh, little man, give me the Kitta steps!

I say little man, give me the Kitta steps!
Kitta Congo, oh, little man, give me the Kitta steps!

My father is not dead, give me the Kitta steps!
Kitta Congo, oh, little man, give me the Kitta steps! 1/A

A song for the loa Bambarra describes the movements of his dance. Bambarra is symbolized by the crab, and the dance posture with "low hips" is regarded as characteristic of the crab's movements: [535]

Bambarra kap prominé, taille bas!
Bambarra allé prominé, taille bas!

1/A [For footnote, see category 116, p. 351. --Analyst]

[illegible]

Bambarra is walking, low hips!
Bambarra is going to walk, low hips!

Damballa Wèdo, being a snake deity, "threads" or "winds" his way like a serpent, and this song describes a serpentine course taken by the dancers as Damballa (here identified as a Nago man) arrives:

Filé na filé, Damballa Wèdo vini wè moin!
Filé na filé, Nèg' Nago vini wè'm là! [Ex. 74]

Wind, we wind, Damballa Wèdo comes to see me!
Wind, we wind, the Nago man comes to see me here!

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After the dancing has been going on for a long while and the pace is fast, there may be a song of banter, such as the following from the Dahomey rites. The dancers sing *laillé, laillé!*, describing a figure of the dance in which the skirts are swirled, and note that they have worn out the drummers. They even offer to carry on their backs those dancers who are ready to fall by the wayside:

Laillé laillé!
Oh laillé laillé oh vièux'!
Tambouyé bouké!
Tambouyé bouké vièux'!
Laillé laillé oh vièux'!
Laillé laillé tambouyé bouké houngan'm!
M'po'té son corps moin vié sœr!
Tambouyé bouké ça!
Laillé laillé! [Ex. 75]

Laillé laillé!
Oh, *laillé laillé*, oh, old people!
The drummers are tired!
The drummers are tired, old people!
Laillé laillé, oh, old people!
Laillé laillé, the drummers are tired, my *houngan!*
I'll carry you on my back, old sister!
The drummers are tired there!
Laillé laillé!

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Interspersed among the songs of the hounfor there are sometimes warnings or admonitions. Usually they are tangent and indirect in statement, and may be from the point of view of the loa or of the houngan. In the following posin song, which accompanies the ritual of making magic, there is a warning to certain people who will feel the effects of the magic. The ceremony includes, among other things, the dropping of lemons, roots, and leaves by the houngan into his sacred basin or pond. The houngan sings:

The loa Aïson complains more vigorously of the bad behavior of human beings:

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Aïson Aïson!
Dépis temps y'ap pa'lé sou moin!
Caé ça yo gainyain?
Bouche à yo papa papa!
Djoule à yo pèté pèté!
Caé ça pou' yo pa'lé moin oh? [Ex. 83]

Aïson, Aïson!
For a long time they have been talking about me!
What's wrong with them?
Their mouths go *papa papa!*
Their jaws go *pèté pèté!*
What is the excuse?

Even on routine business the loa are inclined to be petulant, or to protest that they have been mistreated, that their followers gossip about them, or that they are not ardent enough. Here the deity Simbi en des Eaux complains bitterly that she is not loved by her servitors, the "leaves in the woods," and asks a hounsi named Lolo for news to take to spirits of the ancestors who live "below the water":

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Fè nan bois con ça nou yé!
Nan point zaimain pas mandé quitté!
Fè nan bois con ça nou yé!
Nan point zaimain pas mandé quitté!
Simbi en des Eaux,
Qui sorti en bas dleau!
Gardé ça yo fai moin!
M'dit Lolo, ba moin nouvelle pou'm ba yo! [Ex. 84]

Leaves in the woods, that's the way you are!
There is no love that does not ask to end!
Leaves in the woods, that's the way you are!
There is no love that does not ask to end!
Simbi en des Eaux,
Who comes from below the water!
See what they do to me!
I say, Lolo, give me the news to give them!

But if the loa complain about the behavior of their followers, the servitors also may complain. Songs sung in the hounfor may chide the deities for antisocial deeds, for forgetting their "children," or for carelessness. In the following song the spirit Maît' Grand Chimin is criticized for mounting his "horses" with such fury that they are thrown about

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violently. The hounsi complain that Maît' Grand Chimin treats them as though they were flour being ground in a mill:

Temp' changé nouvelle allé!
Bonjou' Papa bonjou' Roi Grand Chimin!
M'mandé Papa ça'm fai!
Temp' changé nouvelle allé!
Bonjou' Papa bonjou' Roi Grand Chimin!
M'mandé Papa ça'm fai!
Papa m'pas maïs moulin!
Nou dit ou bougé moin!
Papa m'pas maïs moulin!
Nou dit ou bougé moin! [Ex. 85]

Times change, the news goes out!
Good day, Papa, good day, Roi Grand Chimin!
I ask you, Papa, what did I do?
Times change, the news goes out!
Good day, Papa, good day, Roi Grand Chimin!
I ask you, Papa, what did I do?
Papa, I am not corn flour!
You say you will grind me!
Papa, I am not corn flour!
You say you will grind me!

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When there is sickness within the société there may be songs for the absent ones. Here is a song for an ailing hounsi:

Moin allé wè li, hounsi malade oh!
Moin allé wè ça, hounsi malade oh!
Moin allé wè houngan, hounsi malade oh! [Ex. 86]

I am going to see there, the hounsi is sick, oh!
I am going to see it, the hounsi is sick, oh!
I am going to see, houngan, the hounsi is sick, oh!

Again, the members of the société call upon Ogoun, or St. Jacques, to help one of their number who is sick:

St. Jacques maré chwal li,	St. Jacques ties his horse,
Li pas dit personne oh,	He tells no one, oh,
Véyé li pou' moin!	Take care of him for me!
Li met gainyain vers,	He may have worms,
Li met gainyain maling nan dos,	He may have sores on his back,
St. Jacques oh!	St. Jacques, oh!
Ba li lavie pou' moin! [Ex. 87]	Protect him for me!

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Ogoun is the dispenser of rum, and in virtually all Ogoun rituals rum is at some time or another in evidence. Sometimes rum is poured into a hot iron pot and bursts into flame. The iron pot is described as Ogoun's

house. A round, polished Indian stone is occasionally used as a *garde* 789
habitation. And old people speak of a very powerful charm known
as a *gros arrête* which in former times was placed on the trail to protect
entire villages or valleys.

Still another potent defensive charm is the *pouin*, which is the 789
product of ritual magic within the cult temple. A pouin may be an 784
actual bundle containing a formula of special ingredients; more often, 796
it is invisible, consisting of magical forces unleashed into space by
the houngan. There are many ceremonies in the hounfor devoted to
the projecting of these magical forces. They are called *cérémonie pouin*
or *cérémonie magie* and are dramatized by special cult songs and dances.
Sometimes the magic ceremony is woven into a more generalized cult
ritual. The powers of the pouin are regarded as wider and more potent
than those of the arrête. Pouins are said to protect an individual or a
group not only against other magic but also against natural phenomena
and accident. A pouin may ward off lightning, for example, or protect
one from falling trees or from shipwreck or drowning. But it is not
solely defensive magic. It may bring success in fishing, or produce a good [777]
crop in one's garden, or aid human fertility. [842]

Since the crops and the garden are the substance of life, much atten- 789
tion is given to their protection. An enemy may attack a man or his 685
household through garden magic. He may bury a ouanga in the earth,
to bring sickness or ruin. He may poison a tree by performing a special [754]
rite at its foot, and its fruits will then carry disease or death to the
one who eats them. Or he may make a compact with the earth so that
it will dry up and refuse to produce for the one who tills it. Against
all these malevolent possibilities, as well as against common thieves,
the Haitian peasant has many magical and practical resources. Some [775]
people are said to employ zombies as watchmen. These fearsome
creatures will capture a trespasser and hold him for the owner of the
field.[3][4] Or perhaps the owner will place special arrêtes in his garden.
Occasionally a man will protect his fields by planting *piquettes* in the
earth. The *piquette* is a piece of sharpened bamboo or hard wood. Its
point is dipped into poison, and it is placed in the ground, sharpened
end up. An unwary intruder who steps on a piquette may die of his
wound.

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To counteract the *maljok*, or evil eye, a man may procure from a bocor 789
a special shirt made of wide strips of red, white, and blue cloth sewed 791
together. This shirt, called a *mayo* or *manyo*, is worn for seven days if
the *maljok* is a rather ordinary one. If the evil force is a particularly
virulent one, however, the *mayo* will be worn as long as twenty-one

[3][4] [Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy" Journal of Negro History, October, 1940, p. 503. Cf. p. 351, Category 116.-- Analyst]

[P. 112-CC]

142 [illegible]

41. *Vodoun drummers, northern Haiti. The drums are characteristic of that region. The boy at left, although only twelve or thirteen years old, is an accomplished drummer.*

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P. 112-N]

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20. *A Vodoun altar in northern Haiti, scarcely distinguishable from a Catholic shrine. Houmfors range from the simple to the complex, from the poor to the rich, from the primitive to the sophisticated, and from the bizarre to the artistic.*

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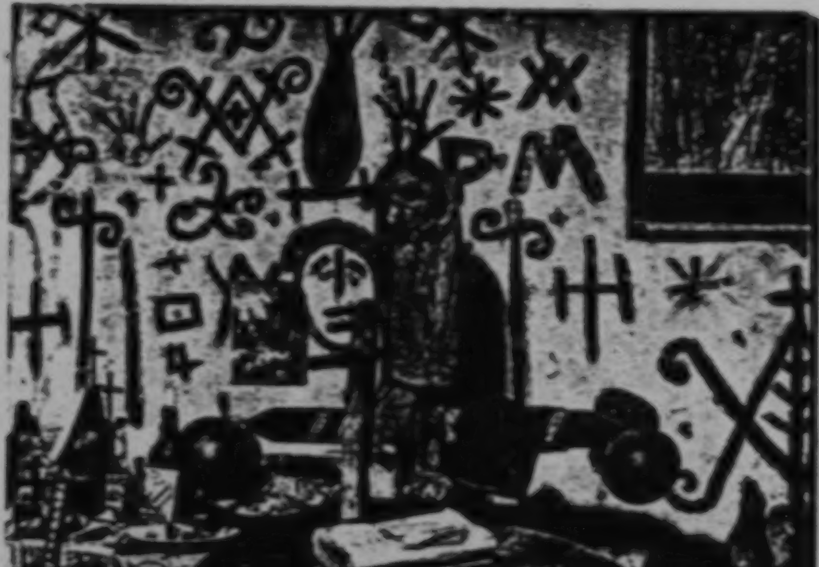
21. *Altar in the houmfor "Société de la Belle Jeune Fleur" in Port-au-Prince dedicated to the loa Pingo Mass. The cross surmounted by the skull represents the deity. Behind the table, leaning against the cross, is the pestle with which the loa "grinds" his enemies. On the other table are razor blades for Pingo Mass to eat.*



[P 112-Q]

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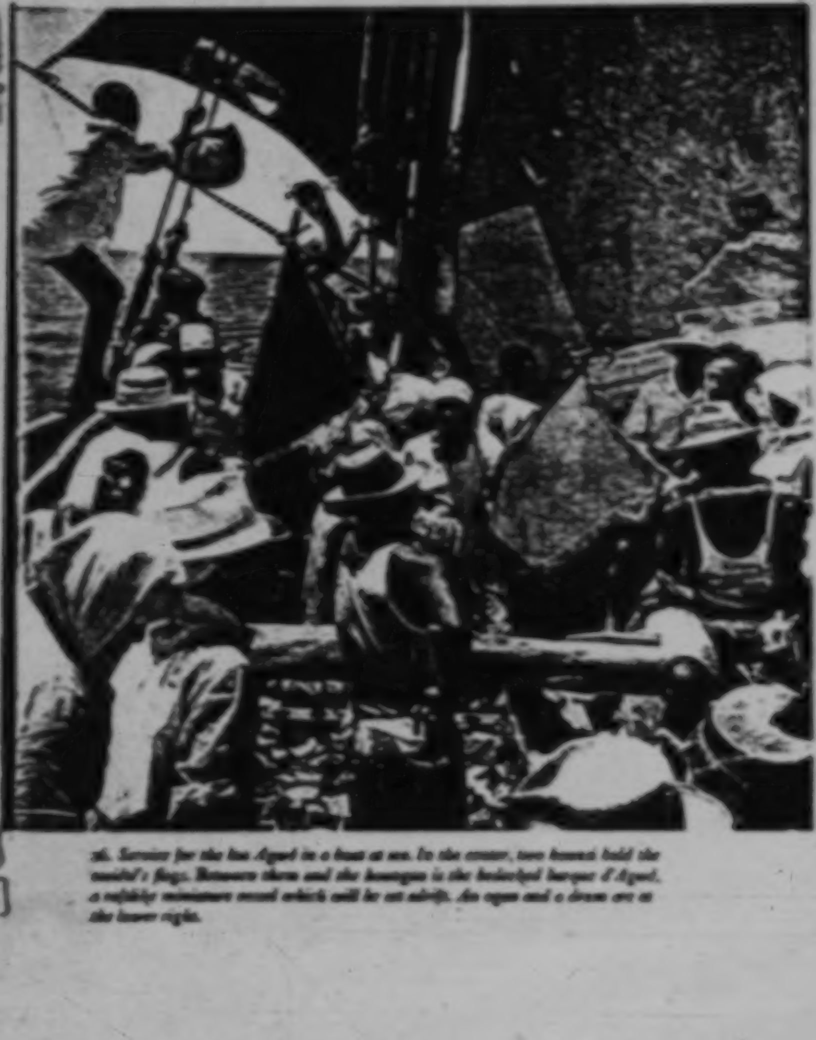

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26. Service for the loa Agwé in a boat at sea. In the center, two hounsi hold the société's flags. Between them and the houngan is the bedecked barque d'Agwé, a sailship miniature vessel which will be set adrift. An ogan and a drum are at the lower right.

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P-112-R]

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27. *Saluting the loa. In the center, with sword, is the laplace, flanked by two hounsi carrying sequin-studded flags. In the background, left, is the houngan with his asson.*

H. Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P. 112-U]

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50. A Christmas service near Léogane: ritual "bathing" in fire. The two young women are hounsi possessed by a loa of the Ghédé family, probably Jean Zombie. Their nostrils are stuffed with cotton and their jaws are bound in the manner of corpses, in honor of the deity, who is a "dead" loa. In a state of possession they seem to be impervious to the intense heat.

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P 112 - Y]

35. *A hounsi in the first stage of possession by a loa.*

Mousondi. In present-day Trinidad there is a Calinda dance which closely resembles the Mousondi; Puerto Rico has its Bombo Calindin; and under another name the "battle dance" survives among Negro communities in Surinam. The counterpart of the Calinda in Brazil is the Capoeira, for which musical accompaniment is provided by African-style "belly harps" (musical bows with gourd resonators) called *berimbau*. The tradition lingers on in Haiti in modern mock prize-fighting dances sometimes performed in Rara season. 171 535 [178]

The stick dance (*Batonnie*) of the Haitian carnival season, mentioned in chapter 8, is of more than passing interest for the reason that almost identical dances have been reported from some areas of West Africa. In the Haitian dance (see fig. 73) the baton wielders, all males, for unexplained reasons are attired in women's clothing. A photograph made in 1958 of a baton dance among the Ewe people of Togoland depicts a scene scarcely distinguishable from a Haitian Rara performance, and it is noteworthy that its all-male cast is in women's dress.[7]

In addition, there remain a number of fragments of dances of the past. In religious ritual, on rare occasions, one may see animal dances in which the performers mimic animal movements, holding in their hands long sticks to simulate front legs. This type of dance has been reported frequently in West Africa, particularly in connection with totemic rituals.

There is a dance in the Arada ritual in which the loa Legba is invoked. A hounsi—usually a man—comes onto the dance court wearing a kind of cane-crutch called the *baton Legba*, or Legba stick. The baton is about the length of a cane, with a long, grotesquely twisted "handle" that fits under the crotch of the legs. The dancer wraps one leg around the stick and walks as though he has only one foot. In the dance, he spins around on the stick, leaps, and pirouettes. Identification of the stick as well as the dance with Legba, and its position between the legs, seem clearly to relate it to the phallic sticks used in dances for Legba in Dahomey. 796 774 535 171 ●

Among the secular exhibitionistic dances of Haiti, there is one in which a man stands on his head and goes through erotic motions to the accompaniment of drums. 535 [831]

In addition to the almost countless dances of African origin or inspiration, there is the ever-popular Meringue, a European-type social dance which is known in many forms. Haitian connoisseurs of this dance believe there are three main forms of the Meringue: the "Meringue de Concert," in which the rhythm is slow and "caressing"; the "dance Meringue," in which the rhythm is quasi-fast and very gay; and the "Meringue Coundjaille," in which the rhythm is very fast. The last [171]

[7] [United Nations Photograph no. 62065. Cf p 352, category 116. -- Analyst]

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[576] A protest theme that runs through many a song stems from the feeling of having been slighted or improperly received in the house of another person. The following song airs the complaint of a person who feels he has been treated shabbily. Metaphorically, he says he is used to eating from an earthern bowl but has been served food in a gourd dish, from which only the poorest of people eat.

Ma 'bitué mangé nan bolle,
M'pap mangé nan couïe cipé! [Ex. 97]

I'm accustomed to eating from a bowl;
I'm not going to eat from a cut gourd!

[574] Or again, there is the story of the unwelcome voyager, a person who travels all the way from Jérémie, far out on the southern peninsula, to the distant town of Arcahaye, only to find that he is not wanted there:

Moin sort' Jérémie!	I come from Jérémie!
Moin passé Ans Capre!	I pass through Ans Capre!
M'rivé L'Arcahaye, oui zami!	I arrive in Arcahaye, my friends!
C'est moin mêm' yo pas vlé wè yà,	It is me they don't wish to see here,
Moin yo wè!	It is me they see!
C'est moin mêm' yo pas vlé wè yà,	It is me they don't wish to see here,
Moin yo wè oh!	It is me they see, oh!
C'est moin mêm' yo pas vlé wè yà,	It is me they don't wish to see here,
Moin yo wè oh!	It is me they see, oh!

[461] A man complains sometimes of the work that has been foisted upon him by an employer, or by a neighbor with whom he exchanges labor:

M'pas milette oh moin pas milette oh!
Habitant prend moin po'té café!

I'm not a mule, oh, I'm not a mule, oh!
The farmer takes me to carry coffee!

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626 Even the officials of the hounfor may be publicly reproached in song for acts of injustice. In the following example the houngénicon, the Vodoun priest's assistant, is taken to task. The song probably was first heard in the course of a ceremony at which the houngénicon was present:

Dahomein y wa, houngénicon oh!
Dahomein y wa, 'génicon é!
Dahomein y wa, yo fai mangé raison moin!
Lè moin vlé pa'lé ou pas vlé moin pa'lé!
Lè moin vlé chanté ou pas vlé moin chanté là!
Dahomein y wa, yo fai mangé raison moin! [Ex. 98]

Dahomey *y ou,** houngénicon, oh!
Dahomey *y ou,* houngénicon, é!
Dahomey *y ou,* they do me wrong!

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* The word Dahomey is frequently used as an exclamation.

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When I want to talk you do not want me to talk!
When I want to sing you do not want me to sing!
Dahomey y ora, they do me wrong! *

Another note of criticism within the hounfor concerns a person who has been putting on airs of importance. The song states that he (or she) in reality has not even qualified for the lowest order within the cult, even though he behaves as though he were the cult chief:

Ou poco hounsi oh!	You are not yet a hounsi, oh!
Ou di'm ou c'est houngan!	You tell me you are a houngan!
Ou poco hounsi!	You are not yet a hounsi!
Ou di'm ou c'est houngan c'est pa!	You tell me you are a houngan, it is so!
Oh Paille à Terre!	Oh, Straw on Earth! †
Pousse allé!	Push and go!
Oh Allada malade oh! [Ex. 99]	Oh, Allada is sick, oh! ‡

Poverty is so normal in Haitian life that a man who accumulates wealth in any form becomes conspicuous. Ordinarily he does not welcome this conspicuousness. It makes him a target of gossip and rumors, and of those who might wish to collect debts from him, borrow money, or obtain other favors. He becomes a *gros nèg'*, and finds himself increasingly cut off from the community of ordinary, poor people. Needless to say, Haitians, like other people, dream of striking it rich. Wherever poverty has been acute, whether in Europe, Asia, or America, the folklore is full of tales of finding great treasures. Haiti is no exception. Many Haitian folk tales and folk songs deal with this theme, particularly with obtaining wealth by magical or supernatural means. Sometimes riches are obtained through *engagements*, unholy compacts with devils or demons. In some stories loa facilitate the discovery of treasure, in others a powerful bocor accomplishes it through magical practices. If a man suddenly becomes well-to-do, therefore, rumors may spread in regard to how he came by his wealth. If he is suspected of dealings with devils or with a powerful bocor, his apparent success in his venture makes him a neighbor to be feared. To avoid incurring envy and hostility, people tend to play down their financial successes and pretend they have nothing in life but the clothes they wear, their houses, and their gardens. Spreading word that a poor man has hidden money is regarded as a mean and reprehensible act. Numerous folk songs protest against this injustice:

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Désastre tombé nans lacour-yo!
Si m'apé travaille li nans cour-yo,

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* Literally: They eat my rights.

† An exclamation, the name of a certain [illegible].

‡ Allada, the name of a town in Dahomey, used in the sense of "people of Dahomey." The line means, "Things are in a bad state of affairs."

How much of their reputation for cannibalism was deserved is a matter of speculation. Bizarre tales told by the colonists, as well as rumors and legends propagated about the societies by nonmembers who feared them, did result in a body of folklore which portrays these groups as malevolent. The societies themselves, no doubt, often supported such beliefs to increase the awe in which they were held. 173 575 777 266

In modern Haiti, however, there is no secret or fraternal society of the kind that probably existed in prerevolutionary days. Nor is there anything comparable to the Abakwa, or Carabali, an Ibo secret society that has survived in Cuba.[2] 178 575

Curiously enough, the most significant noncult organization in Haiti today is the Masonic order. Yet it has not remained distinct from the cults but has become interwoven with them. Many Vodoun and Congo services have rites or dances that are designated as Maçonne (Masonic). Houngans often feel that affiliation with the Masonic order offers distinction and prestige for the houmfor that the ordinary cult center does not have. 575 794

As for the Cilinda, the Cochon Rouge, the Cochon Gris, the Zobop, the Vinbindingue, and the Mandingue societies, they appear to survive in name rather than in fact. The rumors and tales go on, as they do about zombies, devils and loup-garou. It is mostly at carnival time that their names are heard. A Mardi Gras band, appropriately costumed, may herald itself as a Cilinda or a Cochon Rouge group. It will sing songs it regards as appropriate to the kind of effect it is trying to achieve. Such groups are not taken seriously. They are merely part of the carnival fun. But to members of older generations they do recall tales about the secret societies that met under the limbs of the mapou tree by torchlight to conduct their nocturnal affairs. 178 575

The songs that follow are reputed to belong to the Cilinda, Vinbindingue, and Zoubcrap societies; but they are infected with a frivolous quality which suggests they may have been heard for the first time in the carnival celebration rather than in the dark shadows of the mapou. 533* 575

One of the legends concerning the Balbindingue, or Vinbindingue, is that of the dancing drum. The theme is a special one, but it is related to other stories about dancing calabashes in the Calbasse ritual and about dancing hoes. This song describes a gathering at such a dance: 533* 539* 575

Balbindingue!
C'est là n'homme mort yé!
Cimitière assemblé!
Balbindingue!
C'est pas seul tambour qui dansé!
Pardon moun pied!
Balbindingue!
C'est là n'homme mort yé! [Ex. 124]

[2] [See Courlander "Abakwa Meeting in Guanabacoa," Journal of Negro History, XXIX (1944), 461ff. Cf. Cat. 116, p. 353.-- Analyst]

535 The Craft
522 of drum making is a very skilled one, but the tools are
[612] simple: chisels, machetes, and fire. The core of the log is removed by burning and gouging, and the outside is shaped with a machete, or sometimes a hatchet. The wood is selected and procured carefully. Firing of the core of the log depends a good deal on how dry the wood is, for the wood must burn slowly. It is believed that wood cut at the right stage of growth and at the right phase of the moon is resistant to the
[829] ever-present powder-post beetles. Mahogany was once favored because it was durable and beetle resistant, even though it was heavy. But in recent decades mahogany has become scarce, and modern drums are made of lighter woods.

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[971] Drums made in the nineteenth century not only conformed to the patterns of certain West African prototypes but were also carved and decorated. Some of these old drums are still to be seen, but there are not many left. An ancient carved *assotor* drum (previously cited) has fortunately been preserved by the Bureau d'Ethnologie. But between the ravages of the powder-post beetles, age, and the periodic orgies of drum burning by the church and misguided public officials, most of these
[648] ancient works of art have long since disappeared. During the American occupation of Haiti—from World War I to 1932—American military personnel also contributed to the mania for drum burning. And as late as 1941 there was a massive, cleric-inspired drive to wipe out these instruments as remnants of *savage* elements in Haitian life.

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531 The effect of this war against the drum was only to improve the business of the professional drum maker. Drums had become expendable, hence they were made simpler. The carved decorations disappeared. Paint was substituted, and less attention was given to detail. The important thing was to produce a good functional instrument. But the creative instincts of the drum makers sometimes still take over, and many of the modern drums are beautifully proportioned, with delicate geometric patterns carved around the base, or foot. Among certain categories of drums the painted decorations consist solely of the name of the loa to whom the instruments have been dedicated—St. Jacques perhaps, or Papa Pierre, or Ezilie.

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996 Drums differ in design according to the use for which they are intended. The Arada or Vodoun drums are used primarily in connection with the dances and rituals of the Vodoun cult—the cult built around the gods and rites of Arada and Yoruba theology. They resemble closely drums which are used today in Dahomey, Nigeria, and Togoland. They
534 usually come in sets of three. The largest, the *maman* (also called *hountor* or *hountogri*), may be three to four feet high. The middle-sized drum, or *second* (also called *grondé* or *moyen*), is about two feet

[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 193]

534 the pegs. High notes are achieved by striking the drumhead near the
533 rim, and low notes near the center.

534 The drummers usually sit together on a bench or in chairs at one side
of the dance court. The larger and middle drums are slightly tipped
516 to keep their "mouths" open; the *bula* stands squarely on its base and is therefore somewhat muted. The player of the *manman* often drums in a standing position, bracing the instrument by means of a cord around his thigh.

534 Another drum associated with the Arada rites is the assotor. This drum is usually about six feet high, and may be from two to two and a
796 half feet in diameter. It is played in an upright position, and two or three small "windows" near the base permit the sound to emerge.
● [794] This big drum is used only for the Assotor service, at which the Dahomey "nation" plays host to the loa of all the various rites. Usually there is only a single drummer, who plays while standing on a bench or raised platform; but on occasion, two or even three drummers play simultaneously on the single drumhead.

534 It is interesting to note in passing that most of the Vodoun drums
171 have Dahomean names and are of Dahomean design, despite the fact that Yoruban religious motifs have survived. The Yoruban double-headed *bata* drum, used in Nigeria for invocation of the principal deities, appears to have survived in decadent form on the island of La Gonave, where it is known as *pongué*. Curiously, it is played not like the Yoruban *bata* (one hand on each head) but like another Yoruban instrument,
534 the *dundun*, or pressure drum. The instrument is held under one arm and played only on the forward head. Significantly enough, this drum
[794] is said to be used only for Nago (Yoruba) rites. Another drum reserved for Nago services is found in the region of Léogane. It resembles the
[796] Arada drum in every respect except that it stands on three carved legs.

Drums associated with the services of the Congo "nation" are distinctly different from those found in Vodoun ritual. No drumsticks are used, and the heads are of goatskin rather than cowhide and are held in place by a system of cords and hoops. The Congo drum seen today stands about three feet high; old people say that within their memory there was a variety of Congo drum as tall as a man. Unlike the Arada
[531] drum, the Congo drum usually has no carved or painted decoration. For the "pure" Congo rites, two of these instruments, accompanied by gourd or metal rattles of various kinds, constitutes an orchestra. One typically Congo rattling device, called *mayoyo*, consists of three large gourds containing pebbles, on the top of a long pole.

A variant of the Congo drum is used for Pétro rites. It is similar

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1. The Pantheons

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Most of the loa of Haiti appear to belong to two major cult groupings: the Vodoun (dominated by Dahomé rites and traditions) and the Congo-Guinée (dominated mainly by the Pétro deities). In the Vodoun pantheon one finds deities of Dahomean and Yoruban origin, and others whose names seem to identify them with West African peoples such as the Mahis, the Amines, the Adjas, the Foulas, the Sousous, and the Haoussas. The so-called Congo-Guinée group, in addition to the Pétro escorte, appears to have absorbed many loa from Central Africa. Among the Congo-Guinée loa are such names as Mayombé, Loango, Bumba, Moundongue, Mousondi, Angole, Congo, Baganda, and Solongo, all of them designations of regions or tribes of the Congo area. Also in this pantheon are loa bearing the names Bambarra and Siningal (Senegal), from northwestern Africa.

It is not possible to group the loa in such a way that the system will reflect accurately the tradition and usage in all parts of the country. Had all the old cults or "nations" survived intact, the pantheons might have resembled the following:

Arada or Dahomey loa
Anago or Yoruba loa
Mahi loa
Congo loa (including the Moundongue, the Solongo, the Bumba, etc.)
Ibo loa
Kanga loa
Pétro loa
Etc.

In certain parts of Haiti, in scattered and isolated places, one finds Congo, Ibo, and Nago cults that have resisted absorption; but this pattern does not hold for most of the country. In general, Congo and Pétro tend to "march" together; Anago has become a "nation" within

776 a "nation" in the Dahomé rites; and the Ibo group, though still distinct,
184 is frequently allied with the Dahomé rites or the Guinée rites.

794 The following list does not pretend to include all the loa known in Haiti. It is doubtful that a complete list could ever be compiled, in view of the continual generation of new deities and the constant cross-
[128] fertilization between "nations." The loa are grouped here according to most widespread usage. There are contradictions from which there is no possible escape, and these general groupings will not necessarily correspond to the concepts and practices of any specific locality. It is intended here to give a broad and generalized view.

128 Under "The Vodoun Pantheon" I have placed constellations of deities
776 of Dahomean and Yoruban origin, along with others that are clearly
794 identified with Vodoun rites. Under "The Congo and Pétro Pantheons" I have listed the Congo-Guinée loa—consisting mainly of deities associated with Central Africa and deities affiliated with the Pétro rites. Ibo and Kanga loa are grouped together, because in many regions of Haiti the two pantheons appear to be interlocked. A separate listing is given for the Simbi family of water deities in view of their ambivalence; they are sometimes found in the Pétro group and sometimes in the Dahomé, according to local practice.

THE VODOUN PANTHEON

776 **Damballa Wèdo, or Dan Wèdo.** One of the most venerable of Haitian loa. He is
171 generally recognized as the husband of Ayida Wèdo, though occasionally the two deities are merged in a personality called Damballa-Ayida. The concept of a single identity for Damballa and Ayida conforms to Dahomean belief. In both Haiti and West Africa, Damballa is identified with the rainbow and is symbolized as a snake. In Haiti he is associated also with rainfall, springs, and fertility. He is sometimes
[782] described as "white," and the proper food offering to him is a white chicken. Persons
[787] possessed by Damballa usually take on stylized characteristics of snakes. Along with
[177] many other important loa, he has become identified with characters in Christian religious belief. There are, in fact, "two" Damballa Wèdos. One, identified with Moses, comes in talking; the other, identified with St. Patrick, never talks. Food
[782] offerings for the St. Patrick version of Damballa consist of eggs, flour, sugar, and almond syrup. Damballa remains one of the chief gods of the Dahomey cult in Cuba, and he survived into the last century in New Orleans under the name Danny.

[822] **Ayida Wèdo.** Generally regarded in Haiti as the wife of Damballa, Ayida is also symbolized by snake and rainbow, and her color, like Damballa's, is "white." In Dahomey and Nigeria, Ayida is known as a male rather than a female spirit and is regarded there as the same divinity as Damballa, or Dji. In Dahomey, Ayida Wèdo was the great serpent who held up the world. According to one myth, the Creator of the World assigned to Ayida the task of holding up the earth to keep it from falling into the sea. The great serpent coiled himself, tail in mouth, and lay below

[Herskovits, Dahomey, II, 245 ff. Cf. p.354, Category 46. --Analyst]

(*Evo évo* is ritual language. Hounsi kanzo are the servitors of the hounfor being addressed by an unidentified loa.) 533 539 [198] [794]

Example 136

Achadé, oh, oh!
Achadé, I have no mother here to speak for me!
Achadé, oh!
Achadé, I have no mother here to speak for me!
Oh Achadé, oh!
Ogoun is bad, oh!
Achadé Papa!
Ogoun is bad, oh!
Etc.

(The song is addressed to the loa Achadé; it complains of the behavior of another loa, Ogoun.) [782]

Example 137

Beat the drum for me!
I shall . . . , beat the drum for me!
Etc.
Three times after the Angelus, oh!
Three times after the Angelus, oh!

(This appears to be a children's game song. Three "times" after the Angelus would be three hours after six o'clock in the evening.) [524]

Example 138

Liberist fell down!
Liberist fell down! *Adié!*
I am sending a whip for his back!
Etc.

(A children's game song.)

Example 139

Adaïzo!
Miyenvalo Aloko, my Loko, Adaïzo!
Miyenvalo Aloko, my Loko, Adaïzo!
Miyenvalo my Loko, Adaïzo!
Etc.

(This is a song of supplication to the loa Loko. The word *miyenvalo* signifies supplication.) [782]

Example 140

Ten cents is not a dollar,
Cousin, don't take cousin, oh, cousin!

[p. 349)

Notes

CHAPTER 1: *The Making of the Haitian (pp. 1–7)* ooo

[1] The name Ganda survives in Haiti as the name of a deity.

[2] Herskovits, in *The Myth of the Negro Past* (p. 47), provides a tabulation of raw data [113]
found in the manifests recorded for slaves shipped to Virginia between 1710 and 1769: [175]
20,564 slaves were reported shipped from "Africa," 3,652 from Gambia, 6,777 from [162]
"Guinea," 9,224 from Calabar, 3,860 from Angola, and 1,011 from Madagascar. Of those [567]
shipped from the island of Madagascar, 473 were listed as coming from Mozambique.

[3] Bartolomé de Las Casas.

CHAPTER 2: *Man and the Universe: Vodoun (pp. 8–18)*

[1] See Courlander, *Haiti Singing*, p. 7.

[2] Schweinfurth in *The Heart of Africa*, II, 31, says: "In Loango all exorcists and conjurors [113]
are called *ganga*." Leo Wiener, in *Africa and the Discovery of America* (Philadelphia: Innes [793]
and Sons, 1922), III, 32, reports: "Forms of *ganga* have in Bantu the meaning 'medicine' [787]
but also 'magic'—such as Nyika *ganga* and Kongo *nganga*." [171]

[3] Gorer, *Africa Dances*, p. 120; Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 208 ff.

[4] From the Fon *houn-so* or *houn-si*. Among the Arada of Dahomey a *houn-si* was re- [171]
garded as a spiritual wife of the deity. She was a servant of the cult temple, and in some [794]
instances a wife of the cult priest.

[5] Translated from the French of Aubin, *En Haiti*, pp. 57–59.

[6] Deren, in her *Divine Horsemen* (pp. 119 ff.), gives an excellent report of a service for [114]
Agwé in a boat at sea. Aubin (*op. cit.*, p. 108) seems to have given the first description of [78]
this service at sea for the loa Agwé.

[7] Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, p. 119.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 123. Leyburn advances the theory that Vodoun developed during this period [114]
as a result of the vacuum left by the Church. Although the Church did in effect leave the [174]
field to the African cults, one must assume that the Arada, Congo, and other cults were [175]
already organized and possessed of great vitality before the Haitian revolution. Implicit [771]
evidence points to a continuity of cult life from the earliest days of the African on Haitian [793]
soil. There are no statistics to reveal the extent of cult membership at the end of the
eighteenth century, but the content and form of Vodoun today are so overwhelmingly
African that it is difficult to think of Haitian cult activity as the product of a renaissance.

CHAPTER 3: *The Loa: Gods of the Haitian Mountains (pp. 19–29)*

[1] The term *vodoun*, used in this precise sense, conforms to the original Fon (Dahomean) 776
usage. The term *houngan*, also of Fon origin, signifies "spirit" and belongs to the same root 192

CHAPTER 5: *Services for the Loa and the Family Ancestors (pp. 41-74)*

[1] Note that the houngan and the laplace are performing services normally performed by the *prêt' savane.* 000

[2] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 165.

[3] Parsons, *Spirit Cult in Hayti.*

[4] Account given by Jean Ravel Pintro.

[5] Informant: Albert Kofi Prempeh, Ghana.

[6] Account given by Voluska Saintvil. A. W. Cardinall notes in his book *Tales Told in Togoland* (p. 69): "Trees are in most cases treated with respect. Before a man dare fell one for a canoe he must and invariably does sacrifice to its spirit and apologizes for the harm he is about to do it." [534] [778] [796] [171]

[7] The rite of *rafraîchi tête* is conducted periodically for a *maît' tête* after the original *lavé tête* ceremony. The purpose is to "refresh" the loa and make him content with his residence in the head of the devotee. [782] [796] [823] [776]

[8] Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, p. 233.

[9] It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain Negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in familiar form.

[10] Odette Mennesson Rigaud, "Notes on Two Marriages with Voudoun Loa," in Appendix A of Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 264.

CHAPTER 6: *Songs of the Peristyle (pp. 75-94)*

[1] This theme is further commented on in chap. 13. Compare with the following excerpt from a Surinam song reported by Herskovits in *Suriname Folk-Lore* (p. 689): 171 533 539 794 796 776

I have no mother there,
I have no father there,
I have no sister there,
I haven't got anybody there.

CHAPTER 7: *In the Mapou Tree: Magic, Demons, and Compacts (pp. 95-104)*

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[1] Simpson, "Haitian Magic," *Social Forces*, October, 1940, p. 97.

[2] Note the coincidence of the term *gris-gris* or *grigri* as used in the United States, where it has the same meaning as *mojo*, or "voodoo" charm. [776] [789] [791]

[3] Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy," *Journal of Negro History*, October, 1940, p. 503.

[4] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, p. 243.

CHAPTER 8: *Mardi Gras and Rara: Jugglers, Maypoles, and Kings (pp. 105-109)*

[1] Aubin, *En Haïti*, p. 42.

[2] Marionettes of this kind have been observed in both East and West Africa and are well known in the region of Senegal. I saw a phallic marionette, virtually identical with the Haitian version, in the neighborhood of Khartoum, Sudan. [171] [541] [536]

CHAPTER 9: *Land and Work (pp. 110-121)*

[1] Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, p. 362. 583

[2] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, I, 300 ff., describes Dahomean polygamous marriage in its various forms. Although Dahomean plural marriage is complex in terms of gifts, obligations, and 171 595 423 178

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Paralleling the accepted form and existing at the same time, is the Vodun religion. To this faith practically every member of the lower caste adheres; but no casual visitor ever sees a Vodun "temple," or would recognize one if he saw it. Vodun "priests" likewise have no characteristic dress to set them apart from their barefoot country neighbors. The state gives absolutely no support to this folk religion, which has no seminaries, no orders, no publishing house, nor even any orthodoxy. One is not a member of the Vodun religion or church; rather one believes and practices Vodun.

The paradox of the religious situation in Haiti lies in the fact that although the masses are Vodun worshipers, most of them are likewise Catholics; that although the élite formally disapprove of Vodun, many of them are profoundly interested in it; that although the state supports the Catholic Church and officially frowns on Vodun, it does not, cannot, and apparently would not if it could, suppress it altogether. The result of these contradictions is a strange intermixture of creed and ritual, mental struggles among certain of the élite, supersensitiveness to foreign opinion in connection with "Voodoo," and a clandestine air which adds to the mystery most strangers are determined to find in Vodun.

An understanding of these religious ambiguities must depend to some degree upon a knowledge of Haitian history, for both Catholicism and Vodun have colonial origins, together with local peculiarities and historical developments, which make them characteristically Haitian.

175 795 346 to try to renovate the old. Gradually the work became established, increasing in scope with the years.

175 795 It is not necessary to present a detailed history of the work of Catholicism in Haiti since 1860. The most striking feature of these years is its relationship to Vodun, which will be treated shortly. The progress made by the Church itself can best be seen by a summary of conditions in 1930.

794 795 162 Haiti is divided into dioceses named after its principal towns and cities. The population statistics are based upon figures of births covering more than fifty years, and although estimates, they are probably as accurate as any other population statistics for Haiti:

Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince	942,700
Diocese of Cap-Haïtien	453,000
Diocese of Les Cayes	628,000
Diocese of Gonaïves	475,000
Diocese of Port-de-Paix	153,590
Total	2,652,290

793 To care for this large and predominantly illiterate population there are 205 priests,[14] only 8 of whom are Haitians; 105 Brothers; and 366 Sisters.[15] The assiduous educational work of these *religieux* will be discussed in another connection.

794 162 The country's 10,200 square miles are divided into 112 parishes, which generally correspond to the political communes, although there are several parishes in the larger centres of population. In the rural sections 465 mission chapels are located at strategic points.[16]

580 Any casual attempt to assess the importance of religion in the daily

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[794] [14] Of these, 156 are in charge of parishes or missions (the secular priests). The remaining 49 are regular clergy (that is, belonging to a religious or monastic order). All parishes in the diocese of Port-de-Paix and two in Port-au-Prince are in charge of the regular clergy; the other regular monks are doing educational work or other special service connected with the dioceses.

[793] [792] [15] The Brothers are Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne; of the number 83 are French, 10 French Canadian, 9 Spanish, and 3 Haitian. The Sisters belong to three congregations: 146 to St. Joseph de Cluny, 198 to Les Filles de la Sagesse, and 22 to Les Filles de Marie.

[16] All the figures cited above are drawn from the *Report of the Forbes Commission to Haiti*, 1930, pp. 16–17.

Vodun, therefore, show the Catholic influence, exerted in the main 771
unconsciously. 171

Unlike the great religions, Vodun lacks a formal theology. As has 794
been said, no seminary exists for the training of priests and priestesses, 771
no congress or college of fathers states or amends the creed; there is no church court to discipline the individual enthusiast, or catechism for the young; no scriptures or sermons are printed or read to strengthen the faith. Vodun is an informal religion of action, not a formal one of reason. It flourishes because it is malleable, adaptive, suited to the needs of a people living close to nature and without education. To give a single lucid description of this Haitian folk religion, created as it is by everybody and by nobody, is about as possible as to give one description of home life, which varies according to the couple. We may, however, outline the common elements of creed and practice.

2. *Formative Days*

To say casually that Vodun is African in origin is to say little more 771
than that it does not stem from the great world religions. There is no 174
unity in Africa today; there was still less in the eighteenth century when slaves were being imported into Haiti. At that period it was possible to find a new dialect and a different set of folkways every few miles along the western seacoast. Two slaves from one geographical region (the Gold Coast, for example) might not understand each other or have the slightest predisposition to sympathize with each other's customs.

Colonial planters experimented with slaves from various regions 175
in Africa, just as they might compare breeds of horses; setting tracta- 567
bility off against originality, brute strength against skill, intelligence against health. In this quest for a perfect slave, Negroes were imported from all parts of the Dark Continent, from Senegal in the northwest around the five thousand miles of seacoast to Mozambique and Madagascar in the east. Partly because trading conditions were more favorable in the Dahomey and Congo regions, and partly because the qualities of Dahomean and Congolese were preferred, Negroes from these two sections soon came to predominate over others in the colony. Whereas "Congo" was merely a geographical term, implying no community of feeling among the natives living

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966

SV3 Haiti SV3

Vodun, then, was both widespread and powerful enough to be 175
turned to most effective ends in 1791. Contemporary accounts of it 771
still saw it as a meeting ground of superstitions. The French naturalist, 114
Descourtilz, for example, was primarily struck by the use of the
occult in connection with Vodun; he especially describes a woman [787]
who, under the seizure of her god, took a live coal in her hand [789]
without being burnt; a husband who by the use of magic struck his inconstant wife with a languorous malady, effective for half a year; and the knowledge of poison which was combined with the practice of magic. He mentions but one of the Vodun gods by name but implies the existence of many others.[10]

Madiou, Haiti's first historian, likewise always spoke of Vodun as 114
a savage survival; he says of a native general, "Lamour Dérance, 771
plunged in gross errors, put his faith in *sorcery*, in the prophecy of 781
papas, or priests of *African fetishism*."[11] In his scornful distaste for the vulgar he clearly indicated by his own italics some conspicuous elements of the developing religion: magic, the use of fetishes, and a Vodun priesthood. His illustration of Dérance's error was his making soldiers believe that bullets could not wound them:

> When he marched to combat he was preceded by bands of Congos, Aradas, Ibos, Nabos, Mandingues, Haoussas, who threw themselves against the French battalions with a prodigious intrepidity, crying that the bullets were but dust. But this courage which *superstition* fed was shattered against the ramparts of . . . the Europeans' square formations.

It is noteworthy that the first three black rulers set themselves 175
against Vodun because of its potentialities for sedition. The plots to 643
overthrow the old régime had come to fruition at apparently innocent 796
Vodun dances. Although the ingenuous aspect of the dance
gathering had deceived the white masters, Toussaint, Dessalines, and 671
Christophe knew the meaning of the assemblies. All three had to 659
drive their people hard and knew that resentment would be an 669
inevitable consequence; it must not have an opportunity to burgeon 794
at nightly gatherings. Toussaint was the strictest of the three, for he [illegible]
forbade all dances and nocturnal assemblage.[12] The other two singled ~~[illegible]~~

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[10] M. E. Descourtilz, *Voyages d'un naturaliste en Haïti, 1799–1803* (Paris, 1935 ed.), pp. 116–118.

[11] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, III, p. 33.

[12] In an order of January 4, 1800.

The other two singled

175 out Vodun dances for their bans, permitting the purely social dances.
643 On the eve of the first anniversary of independence, "as soon as
● 794 retreat was sounded, African dances of all kinds began in the tents
and open fields; the Vaudoux dance alone was proscribed; the noise
796 of the drums did not quiet down until morning."[13] Dessalines was
671 more suspicious of Vodun than the other two for, being a superstitious
659 man himself, he feared that some of his growing number of
798 enemies might use sorcery upon him; consequently whenever his
771 active police reported meetings of Vodun worshipers he had the
offenders shot if they could be caught. Practically all Haitians knew
how to distinguish the rhythms of Vodun drumbeats from those of
other dances, so that it was not particularly difficult to track down the
meeting places. What Christophe really believed, no one could say.
He paid outward homage to Roman Catholicism, of course, but
rumor persisted of his great faith in magic and the power of African
fetishes.[14]

175 The élite mulatto presidents, Pétion and Boyer, did not deign to
643 dignify Vodun by prohibiting it. No revelation of their attitude
toward it survives, but we may note that no law of their thirty-six-
794 year tenure of the presidency mentions it. From their other opinions
659 one concludes that they regarded it as merely another of the people's
798 innocent and harmless aberrations. Not one of the foreigners whose
curiosity about the Negro republic led them to report on Haitian
796 life of this period gives an intelligent account of Vodun as it then
771 was. Macaulay, writing in 1831, for example, describes the annual
114 celebration at the source of Grande Rivière de l'Artibonite; he mentions
the festive dances (not Vodun) and singing, then says: "Morning
ceremonies consisted of a solemn sacrifice at which the blood of
victims immolated for the feast were offered, and libations of wine
were poured on the spring."[15] This was clearly a Vodun sacrifice.
Brown, in 1837, writes as a religious man:

> No race is, more than the African, given to religious feelings, though these being but mere sensations entirely independent of thought and reason, manifest themselves in a display of idle fooleries, or dark and hideous terrors of the imagination. They intermix the legitimate ritual of the Catholic faith with the mysterious adoration paid to their national Fetishes, and the

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[13] Madiou, *op. cit.*, III, 186.

[14] See Charles Mackenzie, *Notes on Hayti*, pp. 90–91.

[15] Zachary Macaulay, *Haïti* (Paris, 1835), pp. 90–91.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
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African obi and the Catholic priest both come in for a share of their respect and homage.[16] 114 796

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This is the usual tone of the comment on native religion, as when Candler in 1842 speaks of funerals in country places "with the *rites of heathenism*, such as are practised to this day in the heart of Africa."[17] Of these conventional criticisms of Vodun, one of the more thoughtful is Bonneau's:

> The shocking phantasmagorias of fetishism paralyzed the intellectual development of the African race for six thousand years; superstition is in some sort inherent in its nature. The [Haitian] people need to break with their past. Catholicism has been prodigiously patient and courageous, but it does not possess the necessary corrective for extirpating the fetishism which immobilizes the black population. The Catholic Church, by fractioning the religious sentiment, by forcing thought to diffuse itself in order to take in a thousand secondary details, by imposing on the people practices without number which tend to materialize the cult, by placing as intermediaries between God and men a multitude of saints and genies, encourages and fortifies the tendencies, even the most deplorable ones, of the black race, whose intellect has been shrouded in mist for centuries precisely because it can grasp only with difficulty the relationships between things and ideas, tending rather to lose itself in details than to rise to general and synthetic conceptions.[18]

If the fixing of periods has any clarifying value, one might set the stages of the development of Vodun as follows: 175 771

1730–1790, its Emergence, when the importation of slaves was steadily increasing, with a gradual ascendancy of Dahomean ideas; 794

1790–1800, its practical Testing in the fires of revolt when, out of apparent innocence and enforced secrecy, Vodun effectively united the slaves in their action for freedom;

1800–1815, its Suppression under the black rulers;

1815–1850, its quiet Diffusion to all the people and assumption of the form it now exhibits.

The middle of the nineteenth century was the turning point. Before then it had been so to speak in gestation; under Soulouque, then ruling, it publicly emerged. Until the mid-century élite people had 175 771

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[16] Dr. J. Brown, *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo*, II, 273.
[17] John Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, p. 166.
[18] A. Bonneau, *Haïti: ses progrès—son avenir*, pp. 24–25.

175 ignored when they did not frown upon it. As we have seen, the
771 aristocratic Madiou spoke of Vaudoux as "the sorcerers of our coun-
794 try districts," and President Riché in 1846 whenever he heard a suspect drum, went himself to silence it. Under Soulouque, on the other hand, the élite did not dare to show contempt for practices so dear to His Imperial (if benighted) Highness; indeed, one priestess of Vodun then boasted, "If I were to beat the sacred drums and march through the city, not one from the Emperor downwards but would humbly follow me."

175 For at least a century Vodun had developed with no real obstacles
771 beyond the twenty-year prohibition of the Three Great Blacks. The
794 white planters in the colonial era had been too indifferent and imperceptive to stop it, while the élite of the republic were too proud to
798 concern themselves. The Catholic Church, which might have been its most effective enemy, was too lax and too much hampered in colonial times to curb "slave superstition," while from 1805 until 1860 because of the schism no real Catholic priesthood labored in the country. All this changed after Soulouque: the schism was healed; priests of true missionary spirit came to Haiti; the *Affaire de Bizoton* gave the enemies of Vodun a focal point of attack. Since 1860 the Catholic Church has not ceased its war against the folk religion. Occasionally, as in the days of Toussaint, a ruler has suppressed it. Such executives have probably known, however, that it was much too late to eradicate Vodun. It had decades in which to send down its roots. Efforts against it have about the same effect as the persecution of the early Christians—a strengthening of the faith of believers, an outward submission to restrictive rules but increased devotion to rites now performed secretly, and in the case of Vodun at least, an added attraction to the cult because of this very secrecy. At least one president has been known to be an ardent worshiper. Today, much as the élite turn up their noses at Vodun, there are many who look to it in their hour of need, when the Catholic faith seems to fail or medicine proves helpless.

3. *Vodun Belief*

771 The sincere Vodun worshiper is generally an illiterate peasant or humble laborer who would never bother his mind to formulate a definite statement of his beliefs. Because there is no clearing-house

VIII

RELIGIOUS BORROWINGS

771 ROMAN Catholicism in Haiti is, as we have seen, the officially approved, socially proper, and outwardly recognized religion. Vodun, on the contrary, is legislated against and driven into the background by the élite who are ashamed to have foreigners see the power in their country of a folk religion which has its crude side. These two are Haiti's faiths.

● 794 No one takes a census in Haiti, for the peasants have their suspicions of officials who pry into personal affairs. There is consequently no way of knowing precisely how many Haitians regard themselves as "belonging" to the Catholic Church. The priests list the whole population of a diocese as Catholic. In so doing they are probably not far wrong, for although not every person gets to confession each year or attends to his other religious duties, certainly nineteen out of twenty Haitians, élite and common folk alike, would claim to be Catholics. On the whole, it may be that the simple people are more sincere in this, for they are not touched with skepticism where things spiritual are concerned.

771 171 In the United States censuses of religious bodies, if an individual is listed as a member of one denomination he cannot be listed as a member of another. We are trained to religious exclusiveness: we are *either* Baptists *or* Methodists, Jews *or* Catholics. Not every people, however, has schooled itself to such sharp distinctions. The Japanese Buddhist may regard himself as a worshiper of Shinto as well; the Chinese can be Taoist and Confucian at the same time. By our rigidity we deny ourselves a great deal of inner comfort: I may like the earnest fervor of the Missionary Baptists but like as well the stately ritual of Anglo-Catholicism; I must accept one or the other, however, for if I am a member of the former sect I cannot at the same time be admitted to all the rights and privileges of the latter. There is probably a spiritual compensation resulting from such single-minded allegiance, but we are frequently forced to deny

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validity to forms and ideas which we know, in our hearts, might 171
sustain us.[1]

The Haitian peasant is not interested in making formal distinctions. 771
If he is critical, it is only of results, rarely of the means used to obtain
those results. If he cannot gain his ends in one way he is not too
proud to try another, and still a third. Nineteen out of twenty
Haitians, then, being Roman Catholics in religion, are likewise wor-
shipers of Vodun. There is so much mystery in the world, so much
misfortune, beauty, sorrow, and joy that it would be unthinkable to
deny God or the gods: mankind has worship enough for them all,
and need enough of them all. There is to the peasant no conflict [798]
between Vodun and Catholicism; the two are complementary, even
if sometimes the Catholic priests make coöperation impossible.

Let us recall for a moment the earlier history of the country. In 175
the days of slavery one may imagine the Church would have found 177
it difficult, even if its priests and planters had been willing, to train 771
all the blacks as thorough Catholics. Some concepts took root, some
rites immediately appealed. Below the surface, however, the African 794
ideas of the preponderant Dahomeans were spreading through the plantations. In the crucial early days of independence, when the customs and social institutions of the Haitians (as Haitians, not as expatriate slaves) were in process of formation, the country's rulers were not deeply religious; moreover the State was in open schism from the Church. For fifty-five years no approved churchman was at work with the people. The seventy men whom some historians mention as priests were on the whole venal and self-seeking, even vicious. Their least concern was to wean the people away from their superstitions, for precisely in these folk beliefs lay the greatest source of gain. By the time the breach between State and Church was healed it was too late to make single-minded Catholics of the Haitian peasants. They would accept what the new and active priests taught them, but not to the exclusion of what they had believed for a century.

With the élite the Church has had more success; assiduous teach- 565
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[1] This either-or dichotomy is not limited to religion: we divide ourselves similarly, in politics, family life, residence, and so on. If I am a Lutheran, a Republican, a married man with a home in New York, I cannot at the same time be an Episcopalian, a Democrat, and a voter in Chicago with a second spouse and family there. What is impossible and ridiculous for Americans, however, is in some ways the normal course of life for the Haitian.

175 when slaves were to be sold. Even when whole families were brought
567 over together from Africa, it was considered discreet in Saint-
Domingue to separate the various members at the slave market, so
581 that there would be little chance of combinations and intrigues.
[794] Theoretically the Church was in favor of regular marriages between
slave men and women, but even if the Africans had understood or
desired the "sacrament," the opposition of the white planters would
have been enough to curb missionary insistence on this point; the
Jesuits had already been expelled from the colony for their too great
zeal in plantation reforms.

175 As a usual thing, then, slaves simply cohabited. It was not against
the rules of a plantation for a slave and the woman with whom he
567 consorted to live together in a slave hut with the children born to
588 them; but neither was it against the rules for the overseer to put
[843] other slaves into the same hut, or to sell promising slave children as
if they were cattle.[1] Little was done to prevent sex relations between slaves, although masters had varying attitudes toward the results of these relations: some planters welcomed births as a stockbreeder welcomes additions to his herd; others resented the pregnancy of slave women as an obstacle to necessary field work. In the former case, a planter's capital was increased; in the latter, abortions resulted when the overseer drove pregnant women to hard work under the tropical sun.

175 The freedom of the planters with the persons of their attractive
567 female slaves likewise weakened any tendency toward monogamous
family life as conceived by bourgeois European society. The relation-
588 ship between master and slave woman was momentary. Not often was a woman so beguiling that she could be called a concubine; still less often was she a mistress. The latter estate was the height of any female slave's worldly ambition, for not only might she then be freed, but she could live a life of leisure. In rare cases she might hope to persuade her white paramour into marriage. Almost certainly her mulatto children would be free.

175 In so far as there was any predisposition toward strict observance of
565 European marriage practices, it was most clearly exhibited by the
581 group of affranchis. As freedmen they were intent upon establishing

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[567] [1] Under exceptional circumstances slaves found themselves under a benevolent,
[581] religious master who allowed them to be married by a priest and thereafter to live together as a family.

595 spouses. In the hills more than one peasant house was surrounded, as it would have been in Dahomey, by huts in each of which lived a "wife" of the farmer. Matters are not very different nowadays, except that men have learned the wisdom of not having their women live too close to each other.

162 From the guesses of experienced observers, it is probably not far
582 wide of the mark to estimate that only one couple out of a hundred is married according to the approved mode of the Western World.

The State apparently does not care; or, to put it another way, government officials know how impossible it would be to alter a custom confirmed by long usage; one which, moreover, works well enough, since it causes practically no violence or legal cases for the
795 State to attend to. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, is eager
582 to persuade the people to observe the sacrament of holy matrimony. The priests have assiduously endeavored to explore the peasant mind in order to learn what deters the average person from formal marriage. The reasons for the indifference to weddings might be listed as follows:

581 1. Inertia. There is no convincing reason to vary time-honored
178 practice which works well enough, particularly since a wedding is likely to cause a great disturbance of daily routine and even a measure of jealousy on the part of those who have not made the display.

581 2. Suspicion of legal documents and civil officials. People who put
829 their names (or marks) on documents and who call the attention of governmental officials to themselves are almost sure to rue the day. A man knows what can be demanded of him by custom in his informal unions; but who can say what the law would hold him responsible for?

581 3. Expense. The civil license costs; the priest and his assistants
585 must be paid; to be married in church, one should wear shoes; if one wears shoes, one should dress up to them; a church wedding calls for a feast. At least two days must be spent away from work if the proper formalities are carried out.

581 4. Common sense in an inevitable situation. Both State and
595 Church would try to limit a man to one wife; prosperity might demand two or more. Is it sensible to discriminate against a second woman, who might be just as much help to a man as his legal wife?

581 The Church through its priests works unceasingly to answer these
794 arguments, but without notable success. Inertia is hard to overcome;

581 suspicion of legal complications is well founded: the priests therefore
794 try to concentrate their attack upon the remaining motives. Thus
one priest issued a notice at a certain mountain chapel that he would
perform no weddings there for persons who wore shoes; an increase
in weddings followed. By such devices, and by constant sermons on
the significance of the sacrament, he has persuaded many of his
parishioners to be married, yet the vast majority of them continue
in plaçage.[4]

581 Informally entered unions among the peasants, then, rest upon a
sound, practical, economic basis. If the priests are ever to be successful
in their campaign for more weddings, Haitian peasant economy
must undergo a change; even then the plurality of women (if indeed
it exists), now more or less absorbed by plaçage, will work against
the reform.

562 It is confusing to speak of "status" in connection with the domestic
565 life of hard-working people, for status implies law, and law hardly
touches peasant life. Custom governs all—inevitably, since the majority
of peasant women have not been legally married, and since no
peasant would willingly take a case to law. Yet women have a
definite status as compared with men.

In almost every detail a peasant woman's life differs from that of
élite women. The rule of life in country districts is unremitting labor
462 for the female from childhood up. She cooks and makes clothes,
565 labors in the fields after the men have cleared them, does the family
443 washing in the nearest stream, carries water, does whatever housework
is required. Practically every Haitian peasant woman has her
experience of going to market to sell the vegetables, trinkets, or
[484] other wares her family may produce, and to buy necessities. This trip
to market may be short, or as long as twenty miles. One of the
characteristic sights of Haiti is the seemingly endless procession of
women coming down from the hills trudging, or rather swinging
majestically along, with a great load on the head, or riding on the
haunches of a tiny donkey loaded with bulging panniers. Arrived at

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[4] As a result of his campaign for more weddings he has had some unusual experiences. Once, in the midst of the wedding ceremony, a bride rushed out of the chapel and shortly gave birth to a child; when she was able to move again, the ceremony was resumed. Again, traveling into the mountains to perform a similar ceremony, he found a crowd assembled under a tree, assisting at another birth of an infant to a bride-to-be. Sometimes he encounters the argument by a peasant that he will not consent to a wedding until his spouse has proved her fecundity by bearing a certain number of children.